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## The Times Literary Supplement

December 11-17 1987

Priority House, St John's Lane, London EC1M 4BX

### Contents

Christopher Hitchens: American notes 1376  
Michael Carver on the Korean War 1367-8  
Peter Kemp: Jonathan Raban's journals and journalism 1369-70  
Wordsworth at the New York Public Library 1379  
Roy Harris on language and politics 1373  
Cancer phobia 1370  
Fiction: Paul Auster, Bernard MacLaverty 1375

BIOLOGY 1370, BUSINESS AND ECONOMICS 1372, CHINESE AND JAPANESE LITERATURE 1382, ENGLISH LITERATURE 1380, ESSAYS 1369, FICTION 1374-5, FRENCH LITERATURE 1381, HISTORY 1371, LANGUAGE 1373, MODERN HISTORY 1367-8, PHILOSOPHY 1383-4, RELIGION 1384, TRAVEL AND ANTHROPOLOGY 1385

- MICHAEL CARVER  
Max Hastings: *The Korean War*  
Callum A. MacDonald: *Korea - The war before Vietnam* 1367-8  
Fraser J. Hirst: *The Iron Curtain - Churchill, America, and the origins of the Cold War* 1368  
Jonathan Raban: *For Love and Money* 1369  
James T. Patterson: *The Dread Disease - Cancer and modern American culture* 1370  
Maurice McLennan: *Under the Banner of Science - Erasmus Darwin and his age* 1370  
William B. Provine: *Sewall Wright and Evolutionary Biology*  
Sewall Wright: *Evolution - Selected papers* 1370  
DOROTHY THOMPSON  
Stewart Angus Weaver: *John Fielden and the Politics of Popular Radicalism 1832-1847*  
Alex Tyrell: *Joseph Sturge and the Moral Radical Party in Early Victorian Britain* 1371  
Gillian Wagner: *The Chocolate Conscience* 1371  
T. Boone Pickens, Jr.: *Boone* 1372  
Samuel Hollander: *Classical Economics* 1372  
Ian Hay Davison: *Lloyd's: A View of the Room - Change and disclosure* 1372  
Louis-Jean Calvet: *La Guerre des langues et les politiques linguistiques*  
Frederick J. Newmeyer: *The Politics of Linguistics* 1373  
Ronald Francis: *A Woman of Judah - A novel and fifteen stories* 1374  
Ann Shiller: *Loving* 1374  
Andrew Harvey: *The Web* 1374  
Michael Westlake: *Imaginary Women* 1374  
Paul Auster: *The New York Trilogy - City of Glass, Ghosts, The Locked Room* 1375  
Bernard MacLaverty: *The Green Profundo and other stories* 1375  
Zdena Tomlin: *The Coast of Bohemia - A winter's tale* 1375  
Commentary  
Little Dorrit (Curzon West End) 1378  
Peter Speyer: *Old Year's Eve (The Phi, Barbican)* 1378  
A Month in the Country (Various cinemas) 1378  
Manon des Sources (Curzon Mayfair) 1378  
Wordsworth and the Age of English Romanticism (New York Public Library) 1379  
Beatrice Potter 1866-1943 (Tate Gallery) 1379  
NB  
American notes 1376  
Writing types 1376  
Letters on Rabindranath Tagore, The British Council, The Status of Mathematical Astrology, etc 1377  
STEPHEN WALL  
Juliet McMaster: *Dickens the Designer*  
Owen Watkins: *Dickens in Search of Himself - Recurrent themes and characters in the work of Charles Dickens*  
PATRICIA BEER  
Paul Schlicke: *Dickens and Popular Entertainment* 1380  
Beth Kalkoff: *Murder and Moral Decay in Victorian Popular Literature*  
Barbara Weiss: *The Hell of the English - Bankruptcy and the Victorian novel*  
A. Susan Williams: *The Rich Man and the Disposed Poor in Early Victorian Literature*  
Fred Kaplan: *Sacred Tears - Sentimentality in Victorian literature* 1380  
Lloyd Austin: *Poetic Principles and Practices - Occasional papers on Baudelaire, Mallarmé and Valéry*  
Nathaniel Wing: *The Limits of Narrative - Essays on Baudelaire, Flaubert, Rimbaud and Mallarmé*  
J. A. Hiddleston: *Baudelaire and "Le Spleen de Paris"*  
Peter Dayan: *Mallarmé's "Divine Transposition" - Sources of literary value* 1381  
Gérard Macé: *Le Manuscrit de Portunus* 1381  
Cassandra (poem) 1381  
Jin'ichi Konishi: *A History of Japanese Literature, Volume Two - The Early Middle Ages* 1382  
Jonathan Chaves (Translator and editor): *The Columbia Book of Later Chinese Poetry - Yuan, Ming and Ch'ing dynasties, 1279-1911* 1382  
Richard Swinburn: *The Evolution of the Soul* 1383-4  
Ulrich Obel: *Huldrych Zwingli - His life and work*  
David C. Steinmetz: *Luther in Context*  
Helko A. Oberman: *Die Reformation - Von Wittenberg nach Genf* 1384  
Ronald H. Preston: *The Future of Christian Ethics* 1384  
Leslie Woodhead: *A Boy Full of Spirits - Adventures of a film-maker in Africa* 1385  
Ted Walker: *In Spain* 1385  
Trevor Morley: *Coming of Age in the Middle East* 1385  
Among this week's contributors 1387  
Author, Author 1388  
Index of books reviewed 1387  
TLS Listings 1386-7

Cover picture

Jean-Antoine Gros's "Napoleon at Arcate", 1796, now shown in the exhibition *William Wordsworth and the Age of English Romanticism* at the New York Public Library until January 2. The exhibition is reviewed on page 1379.

## Across the dividing line

### Michael Carver

MAX HASTINGS  
*The Korean War*  
476pp, Michael Joseph, £14.95.  
07181 2068 X  
CALLUM A. MACDONALD  
*Korea: The war before Vietnam*  
330pp, Macmillan, £25.  
0333 33011 0

"War", said Wolfe, "is an option of difficulties." That was certainly true of Korea. While revealing the abysmal ignorance of the Americans in 1945 about the history and feelings of the Koreans, and particularly their attitude towards the Japanese, Max Hastings in *The Korean War* nevertheless sympathizes with them in the problems they faced from the time the Soviet Union accepted the 38th parallel as the dividing line between the two zones of occupation. To establish stability and an administration which could provide some hope of acceptable, if not improving standards of life, and also to develop the democratic basis for the people to choose their government in accordance with the three Freedoms for which the so-called United Nations had, in theory, been fighting the war, was a tall order. The Americans' chosen instrument for carrying out these aims, Syngman Rhee, was another Chiang Kai-shek, or worse. But, as Hastings's book makes clear, there was no alternative. In the light of the struggle that was being waged at that time between Mao Tse-tung and Chiang Kai-shek for China, and of the American domestic political implications of support for the latter, their ham-fisted handling of the Korean political situation can be both understood and forgiven. By 1950, after Mao Tse-tung's victory, there could be no question of acquiescing in the slide of Korea down the slippery slope into communism, even if the admirable distaste of the Americans for propping up Syngman Rhee by providing him with strong military support defeated their own purposes. However, that was not their major error. The chronic inability of the American governmental machine to integrate its political and military policies meant that the armed forces were in every way totally unprepared to face the consequences of US foreign policy. The last thing that American soldiers occupying Japan, or their commanders at any level, expected to do was to fight, and certainly not a difficult defensive action against superior forces. The fact that their performance in the rapid withdrawal to the Pusan perimeter in July 1950 did them little credit was hardly surprising. At this point, two jokers were introduced into the hand of cards held by the unfortunate President Truman. One was the presence of the highly prestigious Supreme Commander Allied Powers, General Douglas C. MacArthur; the other was the decision, about which there was hardly any argument, to link the defence of Taiwan to events in Korea. The two were interconnected. Having been taken as much by surprise by the North Korean invasion of the South in June 1950 as he had been by the Japanese attack on the Philippines in December 1941, MacArthur redeemed himself and the forces he commanded by the success of the landing at Inchon in September, undertaken against all professional advice. His victory not only further inflated his already large ego, but made it difficult for his superiors to exert any control over him. The Joint Chiefs of

Staff handled him with kid gloves, and Truman, at their fatal meeting on Wake Island in October, not only failed to exert his authority but encouraged MacArthur in his haughty disdain for any superior direction.

And now the second joker came into play. MacArthur, and Washington also, were gravely in error in assuming that Kim Il Sung's invasion of South Korea was part of a communist master-plan, instigated by the Soviet Union and China acting in combination. Relations between the two countries were cool. Both, of course, would have liked to see Syngman Rhee's régime undermined in the classic communist fashion, but neither wished to become directly involved in Korea, certainly not if it meant engaging in hostilities with the Americans. Hastings argues that the decisive factor in involving China directly was Truman's statement on June 27, 1950, the first day of the North's invasion, warning China that "the occupation of Formosa by communist forces would be a direct threat to the security of the Pacific area and to US forces performing their lawful and necessary functions in that area", followed by the dispatch of ships of the US Seventh Fleet in the waters between the island and the mainland.

Just as the Americans saw the invasion as a major communist threat to their position in the Pacific, so the Chinese regarded the build-up of US forces in Korea, and later the advance north of the 38th parallel to the Yalu, as a resurgence of support for Chiang Kai-shek and an attempt to reverse the success of Mao Tse-tung in establishing his power over China. If MacArthur had had his way and been allowed to accept a contingent of Chiang's troops, their fears would have been strongly reinforced. The Chinese gave clear warnings of their intention to intervene if US troops reached the Yalu, but MacArthur and his forces were as unprepared to meet their onslaught at the beginning of November as they had been to face the original North Korean invasion in June, and their hasty "bugging out" was even more creditable to the US army than had been its original retreat. The Marines performed better (Hastings's description of their withdrawal from the Chosin Reservoir is a model of military writing).

From honest over-confidence MacArthur switched to a calculated pessimism, designed to support his theme that only a full-scale offensive against China, including the use of nuclear weapons, could deal with the root of the problem: this, in his view, was that it was in the Far East, not in Europe, that the communist powers had decided to challenge the West. But America's allies would certainly not support such a policy. Truman's apparent refusal to consider the use of nuclear weapons, at a time when it looked as if the UN forces might be driven out of Korea altogether, "provoking the British to new ecstasies of uncertainty", to use the author's words. However, as the situation stabilized in January 1951, and General Ridgway began to transform the morale and professional efficiency of the US Eighth Army, calmer counsels prevailed, the Joint Chiefs agreeing with the British view that a war with either China or Russia in that region would be "the wrong war in the wrong place at the wrong time". The Americans reluctantly accepted that their aim should be limited to restoring the status quo ante on the 38th parallel. Hastings points out that, if Peking had been as realistic at the same time, and attempted to negotiate an end to the war before Ridgway's counter-offensives got under way, both China and the



One of Bert Hardy's photographs of "political prisoners" of the South Korean army during the Korean war. It is taken from Bert Hardy: *My Life* (192pp, Gordon Fraser, £14.95, 0 86092 03 6).

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United States would have been saved the heavy casualties they suffered over the next two-and-a-half years, and the Koreans, north and south of the 38th parallel, would have been spared proportionally heavier casualties and much suffering. China might have achieved a political solution in Korea more agreeable to its communist masters than that which has developed in the thirty-six years that have passed. MacArthur's refusal to accept that limited aim, and his public lobbying against it, led to his dismissal and replacement by Ridgway.

The problem, as Hastings's skilful reportage of events at a lower level brings out, was transferred to the soldiers in the front line. In attack or in defence, they could not afford to be limited in their effort or commitment. For what were they fighting? For Syngman Rhee and his openly corrupt and cruel régime? For the Koreans, the miserable "gnoks", whose harsh, stinking country the soldiers detested? For that abstraction, the United Nations? Or just to keep communism away from the United States? None of these were causes for which most Americans, especially the draftees, were keen to face wounds or death, and it is surprising that under Ridgway, and Van Fleet after him, they performed as well as they did. For the regulars among them, there was always the chance of gaining glory and promotion, their enthusiasm for action not being shared by their non-regular subordinates. The British – accustomed not to reason why, and buoyed up by professional pride in the need to show the Americans how to be proper soldiers – tended to take a more phlegmatic view. They had the advantage of being rotated by complete units, and not as individuals on complicated points system as the Americans were.

The author's description of the stand of the Gloucesters on the Imjin in April 1951 is exemplary. He makes the point that, as with other heroic incidents in the army's history, the lies should never have been placed in the situation which called for their heroism. While the British 29th Brigade, in which the Gloucesters fought, was being overwhelmed by the Chinese 63rd Army, the 27th Commonwealth Brigade, with British, Australian and Canadian battalions, fought a successful defensive action against a similar Chinese attack on another part of the front, which never hit the headlines. They had been better prepared.

Hastings has much of interest to say on every aspect of the war, and makes telling comparisons with the American experience in Vietnam. One of his more interesting contentions is that the long wrangle over the fate of the prisoners of war on both sides, which prolonged the costly military stalemate for two years after the initial truce, was brought to an end by a calculated leak through the Indians to the effect that the Americans had developed nuclear artillery and were prepared to use it, unless the Chinese accepted the proposal for a neutral body to determine whether the Chinese and North Korean prisoners, who had said that they did not want to return, had genuinely and freely made that choice; and that it was that information which led to agreement at Panmunjom. Another is his debunking of the claim that UN prisoners in Chinese hands were subjected to extreme forms of brain-washing.

In the end Hastings returns to where he began: that the Americans were faced with "an option of difficulties". There never was a clear political or military strategy which could produce the desired result of a free, democratic and prosperous Korea; and the half-measure taken, which has resulted in a prosperous, if not democratic, South Korea, contrasting sharply with a poor, dreary, communist North, was probably the best that could be obtained in the circumstances, and certainly preferable to allowing the whole of Korea to slide into the communist fold.

As a military historian Max Hastings has few equals in the art of blending authoritative description of the political and "higher" military background with vivid, first-hand portrayal of life in the firing-line. *The Korean War* is a worthy successor to the author's *Bomber Command* (1979) and *Overlord* (1984), and will take its place as one of the best British histories of that frustrating conflict yet to be published. Hastings has spared no pains both to dig deep into the archives in search of the real truth, and to seek out and interview those American, Korean, Chinese and British, who took part in

the events he chronicles with such finely balanced judgement. The historian will find it invaluable as a record and the general reader will be absorbed in a fascinating story. To soldiers it will be especially rewarding as a lively account of how men and their commanders react in battle.

Callum MacDonald's book on the same subject is of a very different kind, being intended for the historian or student of politics, rather than the general reader. The author concentrates on the political background, especially that within the United States. It is a scholarly work, documented in great detail.

A recurrent theme of *Korea: The war before Vietnam* is the fundamental importance of the global strategy which Truman's administration adopted in 1950, based on the National Security Council report (NSC-68). That strategy was a reaction to the test of an atomic weapon by the Soviet Union in September 1949, following closely on Mao Tse-tung's final victory. Hitherto communism had been seen as a political threat to be met by political means, US membership of the North Atlantic Alliance having been regarded primarily in that light. The basic philosophy of the report was that Russian possession of atomic weapons put "a premium on piecemeal aggression . . . counting on our unwillingness to engage in atomic war unless we are directly threatened". The free world's confidence in the United States would be undermined if, under the atomic umbrella, peripheral countries were picked off one by one, as Hitler had picked off his eastern neighbours. The domino theory was born. Communism must be opposed by military means wherever it raised its head. The military strength of the US and her allies must be built up. There should be no negotiation, except from a position of strength; and the aim must be to "roll back" communism and eventually bring about its downfall in its heartland.

That strategy had not officially been adopted when the North Vietnamese invaded, but the event appeared to confirm the assumptions on which it was based. It did not, however, apply to the Far East alone. One result was American agreement to the establishment of Nato's military organization and the appointment of Eisenhower as Supreme Commander in Europe. From then on the demands of his command and those of MacArthur's in the Far East were to be in direct conflict, both for resources and in strategic priority. The US Joint Chiefs of Staff, prodded by their British colleagues, were constantly aware of the danger of being involved in conflict with the Soviet Union in

the Far East, which would have much more serious repercussions in Europe.

MacArthur was not the only US general to object to that prudent strategy, and, until his advance to the Yalu had such disastrous consequences, the Joint Chiefs, and others highly placed in the administration, appeared to welcome the opportunity, after the successful landing at Inchon, to "roll back" communism at least as far as the Manchurian border. The argument did not end with MacArthur's dismissal, although a good deal of the heat went out of it when Eisenhower became President and the Republicans had at last achieved their aim of turning out the Democrats who, in the eyes of the influential China lobby, fuelled by McCarthy, had "betrayed" Chiang Kai-shek. The pressure to "roll back" communism in China itself remained, and was a major influence throughout the long period of stalemate between the first armistice negotiations in July 1951 and the final agreement two years later. During that time the political and psychological war between North Korea and China on the one hand, and the Chinese Nationalists, Syngman Rhee and their American supporters on the other, was played out in the prisoner-of-war camps at the expense of the UN prisoners, mostly American, held by the former.

Revelations of the skulduggery which went on in the camps on the island of Kijŏng, which the Americans established but totally failed to control, are among the most interesting in MacDonald's book. The UN prisoners in Chinese hands, although subject to "re-education" processes of varying intensity – rather more intense than one would gather from Hastings's account – were certainly much better off in every way than any held by the Americans, whether the latter's compounds were dominated by the communists or by the Korean or Chinese Nationalists. For both sides "non-forcible repatriation" was a major political issue at the heart of the relations between the United States and the communists. The interests and human rights of the unfortunate individuals in the camps were of little account, and most of the Americans, when finally released, were treated by their own countrymen with contempt.

MacDonald's detailed account of the negotiations leading up to the final armistice does not support Hastings's claim that it was the threat to use tactical atomic weapons that suddenly persuaded the Chinese to accept the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission. He maintains that Stalin's death was the turning-point, Chou En-lai's compromise proposal

made two days after the funeral on March 28, 1953, being publicly endorsed by Molotov on April 30 and tabled at Panmunjom the following day; but he cites evidence that, even before that, when Chou visited Moscow in October 1952, both the Chinese and the Russians had come to the conclusion that it was in their interests to end the war, which continued to encourage American efforts to rearm Germany and Japan. By then, in any case, there was ample evidence that the US forces had made considerable strides in the development of nuclear weapons of all kinds and that the "roll back" lobby, supported by many senior officers in the US armed forces, favoured their use against targets in Korea and Manchuria, if not in China itself. The degree to which the Korean War fuelled the proliferation in numbers and types of nuclear weapons in the US armoury is another of Callum MacDonald's interesting revelations.

At the time, and for long after, it was customary to think it was fortunate for the United Nations that the Soviet Union had chosen to absent itself from the Security Council in 1950 and did not veto the American-sponsored Resolution on June 27 that "Members furnish assistance to the Republic of Korea to help repel armed attack". But according to MacDonald, the fact that the UN was patently seen as an international umbrella for the pursuit of American policy did irreparable harm to its primary function of peacekeeping. Not only was it prevented from acting in that role between the participants in the Korean War, which might have brought it to an end much earlier, but "in future confrontations between the blocs, the UN would prove irrelevant except as a sounding board for propaganda". The concept that the Security Council should act as a headmaster, summoning the prefects to beat the bad boys, faded away.

Whatever the differences between the views of the authors of these very different books, both would agree that the United States was faced with exceedingly difficult choices: that the war had important effects on America's relations with its allies – before it they had been concerned to ensure that the Americans should not return to isolationism, after it they were anxious to impose limits on the extension of American power for fear of its consequences; and both are keenly aware that the people who suffered most were the unfortunate Koreans, particularly those in the North, whose towns and villages were reduced to rubble by American bombs and who were bound in chains of poverty and repression by Kim Il Sung.

association" with America rose and fell almost in parallel with his brief hopes of a durable understanding with Russia.

By late 1945 Harbutt characterizes the situation as one of "Anglo-Soviet Cold War" and Soviet-American " rapprochement". The United States' detachment from Europe allowed Stalin to expand with impunity into the Near East, particularly Iran. But then Churchill's speech in Fulton, plotted in concert with Truman and his advisers, acted as the focus for a transformation of US diplomacy. Churchill set out the great divide between the communist and free worlds with unprecedented starkness, helping shape Truman's perceptions and those of the American public. His call for an Anglo-American alliance, though initially repudiated in America, eventually led to a common front in the UN over Iran and, during 1946, to increasing co-operation in Europe as well as the Near East. Britain's Cold War became America's; by the spring of 1946 our bipolar world had been born.

This is a lucid and sophisticated analysis, which makes thorough use of British and American archives and integrates the results effectively with press reports from both countries and from Russia. Nevertheless, one feels that the essential case has been overstated. The extent of Churchill's influence on US policy in early 1946 remains unclear: the evidence is circumstantial rather than direct. Significant American catalysts for the policy change, such as George Kennan's celebrated "Long Telegram" from Moscow, are given short shrift. Harbutt's account of Russian policy

seems unconvincing. He claims that "It was really Stalin who brought on the Cold War" by stepping outside Eastern Europe and into Iran, but Stalin's conduct there seems at times in Harbutt's explanation to amount to little more than tactical ineptitude. Among all the details one loses track of the deeper geopolitical objectives behind Soviet and American policy.

Moreover, is 1946 really the turning-point? Other historians of the early Cold War have taken up the Anglocentric theme – among them Terry Anderson, Robert Hathaway, Alan Bullock and Robin Edmonds – but they locate the crucial shift in 1947 with the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan. Unlike the Iranian crisis of 1946, these involved decisive and sustained American actions, taken unilaterally and not through the UN. And they were responses to British weakness as much as British influence – as the United States assumed burdens Britain could no longer bear in Greece, Turkey and Western Europe.

Harbutt therefore probably pushes this new Anglocentric revisionism too far. It needs to be fused with all the evidence of indigenous reasons for the shift in US policy, while also recognizing that the Cold War was an evolving phenomenon, not a once-for-all transformation that can be dated to a particular month. Kept in balance, however, *The Iron Curtain* is a stimulating and important contribution to the debate about the origins of the Cold War. It reminds us that the "two big dogs" still had to deal with a tenacious, if rather toothless, old bulldog.

## Sightings and soundings

Peter Kemp

JONATHAN RABAN  
*For Love and Money*  
350pp. Collins Harvill. £11.50.  
0002727298

"The sea", Jonathan Raban observes of Hilaire Bellac, "supplies him with distance and perspective; it enables him to stand aloof – a nautical term, originally, meaning to 'luff-up' into the wind, away from the shore." Like many of his comments on other writers in *For Love and Money*, the remark seems even more applicable to Raban. As this marvellously absorbing anthology – "partly a collection, partly a re-enactment" – keeps you constantly aware, setting distance between himself and the world has long been his speciality.

In his books, Raban appears as a detached and often literally floating observer: jetting round the Gulf States for *Arabia*; navigating the Mississippi in a sixteen-foot skiff for *Old Glory* and keeping a log, as he does so, of the absurdities and atrocities witnessed on the river's banks (he has also published a study of



*Huckleberry Finn*). As *Coasting* made clear, he prefers to savour his native land across a safe stretch of water. It's entirely typical that the one novel he has written is called *Foreign Land* and portrays England as viewed across a gulf of alienation by a returned expatriate.

Raban wryly describes his freelance writing existence as one of "short-distance commuting between the bedroom and the study". But the impression given by this selection from his journals and journalism is of considerable mobility. This isn't just a matter of the exotic jumps remembered here: watching white lightning furl across a churning, coffee-brown Euphrates which looks as though it is being stirred by a giant electric blender; driving through the Everglades past butterflies as big as Chinese kites and alligators, littered "like tarnished pewter castings" in the ditches by the roadside. Even in London, Raban's life is footloose. Drifting in and out of bed-sitters and rented flats, you gather, he has long been a keen moocher round the metropolis. Material gathered on these outings packed his urban travelogue, *Soft City*. Harking back to that time, one piece included here documents – in his usual sharp prose bristling with quirky idiosyncrasy – Raban's alert perambulations of a seven-mile stretch of the Thames. Noticeably prominent among his recordings of life on the margin of the river are people who seem marginal: strolling solitaires like Raban, such as an elderly butterfly-collector brandishing a net and killing-bottle, or a lady in a faded Acot bat treating five cats to a genteel picnic off willow-pattern plates.

Fascinated by lives lived on the periphery and by the crossing of frontiers, Raban frequently reminds you of Graham Greene, whose *Ways of Escape* this book very much resembles. There are the same incisive insights into the evolution of a writer and his writings. Travel and literature are seized on by both authors as anti-depressants and modes of detachment. Raban's style and sentiments some-

times eerily echo Greene: "failure could so easily creep up on a man from behind and silently garrote him". Like Greene, he is almost obsessively concerned with the way early experience shapes a psyche for life.

The subject of the family gets frequently turned over by sharp-edged commentary here. With ruthless trenchancy, Raban delves into the past, laying bare childhood years and fears. Initially nestling in a wartime paradise *à deux* with his mother – at fresco feasts in the Norfolk countryside with battles of Ribena and rare imported bananas – young Jonathan found himself cruelly evicted from this coddled Eden by the return of his father from the forces. All alarmingly scratchy surfaces, from jowl to demob suit, this unfamiliar giant did terrifying things like laughingly holding him by the ankles over a brimming water-butt. The subsequent arrival of two baby brothers further polluted the idyll by overcrowding. Ancestral portraits and heirlooms – inherited in growing numbers by his family-conscious father – added to the claustrophobic clutter. And, in any case, he was soon sent away to boarding-school.

Grinly tight-lipped in this book about his experiences there – "I spent an unhealthy proportion of that five years wishing I was dead" – Raban flinched in consternation from the crude communal pressures and the bullying mystiques of the "house split" and "team spirit" mystiques of the boarding-school. This left him, it seems, with a rigid aversion to joining in, along with an aghast compulsion to watch those who like to do so. The suffocating crush of group activities is often felt in his books. In *Old Glory*, charily mixing with folk swarming round a fairground – "I'd never been much good at being one of the crowd" – he's soon discomfitedly clamped "between the bust of the woman behind and the immense behind of the man in front". Ferociously funny passages in *For Love and Money* follow from his having immersed himself – with wincing vigilance – in ersatz or institutionalized family situations. "Christmas in Bournemouth" records with abrasive gusto his infiltration of a hotel purveying a festive get-together to a gauche gang of strangers. In this setting, Raban's old bruises emit reminiscent twinges: as the "temporary family" assembles, it is "like the first night at boarding school"; later, the occasion, "with its forced intimacies and its building steam pressure of stringent conformity", was becoming all too like a real family. Enlisting, for another assignment, among the frisky crew of a sailing ship, Raban shies away as he discovers that "life aboard was like that of a floating boarding school". Drawn to what he deplores, he lingers in Florida around condominiums offering synthetic "clubbability" to hordes of oldsters got up in ramperwear.

Singularly acute at spotting ways in which rapport goes wrong – the one short story he reproduces here chronicles a marriage's collapse – Raban describes himself as "angularly clumsy at getting on with other people". As a compensation for this, he early "made friends with books instead". Trying to acquaint himself with at least ten a week as a schoolboy, he warned, he says, to the "intimacy" offered by reading. It's a remark that rings a little strangely in the context of his accounts of the authors he has felt drawn to. *Coasting* referred to the "black masks of print" worn by some seafaring writers he has encountered. In *For Love and Money*, this nation meets your eye everywhere. Literary distillations throng the reviews Raban reprints. "Beware of Pritchett's homespun manner", you're warned: "it is an elaborate camouflage." "Trollope, it is claimed, 'loved to disappear behind an endless succession of elaborately raised smokecreens'. Thackeray is 'a pathological actor'. Anthony Powell wears a 'deliberate and evasive mask'. Evelyn Waugh tricks himself out in 'masks and costumes'.

In the company of these crafty folk, intimacy is not the emotion you would most expect to experience. But it is precisely their foodness for distancing techniques – using a persona as a little, most of privacy across which they can contemplate and address their fellows without undue involvement – that gives Raban a sense of empathy with these authors. It is a strategy he himself has assiduously practised, as this book explains. For, in what must be one of the most knowledgeably gripping accounts of literary life since Gissing's *New Grub Street* (a

novel repeatedly mentioned), Raban not only gives you a graphic picture of the day-to-day existence of a free-lance writer and reviewer amid his litter of Jiffy bags and galley-proofs, drafts and deadlines, he also puts you at paradoxically close quarters with a very private personality and the ideal *modus vivendi* it has at last hit upon.

Showing a wistfulness for nautical get-aways long before he took to sailing, Raban says in an early essay that "the writer . . . has his own kind of sea-distance". "My room feels like a tethered ship", he remarks; "to work is to disconnect oneself from N.6, to untie the mooring rope and drift into a geography meticulously free from postal districts". Marine metaphor continually eddies through Raban's prose – whether he's talking about the "tidal movements" of Byron's income or the way Bellow's short stories are "built on the same principle as a waterfall". Under his eye, people can metamorphose into sailing vessels. *Coasting* depicts his vicar father "conspicuous from half a mile away in his cassock, ballooning around him like a hick spinnaker, tawling for souls". In *Arabia*, a young Qatari on the Earl's Court Rand, his white robe gusting in the wind, "had

the look of a single-handed yachtsman managing a difficult passage in a heavy sea".

Now, it seems, Raban has changed himself into a seafaring entity. In a chapter that overlaps with a similar account in *Coasting*, he describes his purchasing of a ship, the Cinsfield Maid, in which to live and write and travel. When, years earlier, he bought a yellow aluminium boat in which to sail the Mississippi, he was disconcerted to find that its seller had thrown in the friendly flourish of painting its side with the name Raban's Nest. The concluding section of *For Love and Money* – portraying Raban's life afloat and ending with the word "Home" – shows how shrewd that salesman was. For Raban, just slightly shifting the image, now contentedly sees himself as "going about the world by boat like a snail in its shell". Carapace and look-out point, closing him in while opening up new horizons, the boat perfectly matches his specifications. It has already been responsible for the production of two invigoratingly good books. *Foreign Country* and *Coasting*. *For Love and Money*, which now joins them, leaves you, just as much as they did, eager for Raban's next haul of sightings and soundings.

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VALE UNIVERSITY PRESS  
13 Bedford Square London WC1B 3JF





# Big C and ballyhoo

Roy Porter

JAMES T. PATTERSON  
The Dremi Disease: Cancer and modern  
American culture  
380pp. Harvard University Press. £20.75.  
0674216253

When, a century ago, cigar-smoking ex-president Ulysses S. Grant died of cancer, it caused a sensation. For forty years ago the disease was killing one American every three minutes; today it is one a minute. Cancer has become "the Big C", but at less ferocious is "cancer-phobia".

As James T. Patterson argues in his sensitive cultural history, cancerphobia derives not just from the lack of a cure, or even the appalling

mortality statistics – after all, heart disease claims more victims. Rather the horror feeds upon the insidiousness of this "loathsome beast", so invasive, voracious, relentless. Because its causes are still not understood, everyone seems at risk; it is the malign revenge of fate against children and athletes, presidents and movie stars alike. Mysteries in turn breed mythologies, and so cancer has spawned "victim blaming". Doctors and public, desperate to explain the inexplicable, have stigmatized the sick, and invented the "cancer personality", all frustration and bottled-up rage, willing a self-inflicted doom.

In one sense, Patterson tells a tale of medical failure. Cancer has hitherto proved medicine's Waterloo. In reaction, from Grant's day up to the present, its scandalous spread has set off a populist counter-culture, reinforcing that all-

American gut distrust of "expertise" and the professional ramp growing rich upon disease. Fearing the surgeon's knife (the AMA got dubbed the American Meatcutters Association), sufferers took to home remedies, faith-healers and a host of quack cures (John D. Rockefeller's father peddled them). Uniting Left and Right, these medical alternatives – the latest was the fad for laetrile – would warm the cockles of Ivan Illich's heart.

Yet – and this is the nub of the story – in medicine nothing succeeds like failure. Precisely because it has not cracked the cancer code, the American profession has been rewarded with ever-increasing funding, commanding hospitals, laboratories and limelight (how many times has the crucial breakthrough been ballyhooed?). The cynic would say that the cancer research empire – itself a runaway

growth – simply cannot afford to defeat the disease. Patterson charts the rise of the American Cancer Society and the National Cancer Institute, and indicates how such bodies have tailored their operations to political realities, playing down the role of tobacco, pollutants and nuclear fallout. Above all, he shows the skill with which the "cancer establishment" has exploited the emotive advertising strategies to create confidence out of crises and drum up hope.

From the 1920s, the public was urged to give to beat "the gangster disease". War was declared, and victory was just round the corner. All this advertising "hype" (Patterson's word) traded on analogy: smallpox, yellow fever, tuberculosis and so forth had each been vanquished, and so would cancer be. Surgery, radiotherapy and chemotherapy in turn were all greeted as the "cancer weapon"; like penicillin or the Salk vaccine, a new magic bullet was almost here. Early detection and early treatment, so publicity stressed none too truthfully, would ensure cures, thereby throwing prime responsibility upon the patient. And above all, the cancer war was portrayed as a battle between the true professionals, dedicated, humane and poised for victory, and a host of quacks. The regulars, exuding professional optimism, may not have vanquished the disease, but they certainly seized their chance to train their guns upon the fringe.

This is an illuminating study of medical politics and ideology, promises and fears, developing some of the speculations of Susan Sontag's *Illness as Metaphor*, and highly suggestive for the AIDS generation. Patterson leans too heavily upon standard sources, and could have probed more adventurously into popular culture. But he puts his finger upon one key feature of cancerphobia across the Atlantic: the American urge to play out even the most secret of fears under the full glare of publicity. The conspiracy of silence was soon overtaken by the need to talk it all out. When English cancerphobia is explored, one suspects the reverse will be found, among professionals and public alike.

# Reformers of means

Dorothy Thompson

STEWART ANGAS WEAVER  
John Fielden and the Politics of Popular Radicalism 1832-1847  
320pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £30.  
0198292755  
ALEX TYRRELL  
Joseph Sturge and the Moral Radical Party in Early Victorian Britain  
255pp. Croom Helm. £22.95.  
0747032009

The years between the end of the French wars and the middle of the nineteenth century were a time of change and turbulence in Great Britain, Ireland and other parts of the empire, including India and the Caribbean. Opposition to slavery and the colonial apprentice system, to Catholic disabilities and the Act of Union between Britain and Ireland, hostility to the factory system in England and Scotland, defence of trade practices in the face of dilution and mass production in nearly all industries, resistance to state control of the press, to the Church of England's domination of educational and religious matters, the beginning of pressures for greater participation by women in public life, nationwide movements in England and Ireland for temperance and total abstinence, the foundation of pacifist societies and of communitarian groups dedicated to the establishment of a new moral order, all these and many other movements interconnected to create steadily increasing pressure for the reform of Parliament and institutions. Nearly all the various movements had at least a political lobby, while many of the most widely supported were for a time subsumed in an all-out movement for universal suffrage. It was a time, as George Eliot recalled some years later, "when faith in the efficacy of political change was at fever-heat in ardent Reformers".

It is surprising that two of the most influential of the radical voices to be heard in those years have had to wait until now for scholarly biographies. John Fielden, senior partner and chief administrator in the world's largest cotton firm, was also one of the originators of the Chartist movement and a lifelong campaigner for legal measures to protect the hours, conditions and rewards of workers in industry. Joseph Sturge was a wealthy Quaker and corn dealer, a leading publicist of the British anti-slavery movement, pacifist, temperance campaigner and at times campaigner for adult male suffrage. Fielden has been the subject of work by local historians in his native Tadmorden, Sturge has been celebrated in two hagiographies, and both were included in G. D. H. Cole's gallery of *Chartist Portraits* in 1941. The two volumes under review, however, represent the first full-length modern studies.

Stewart Angus Weaver deals primarily with Fielden the politician. By limiting his scope in this way, he is able to produce in a restricted space a detailed account of one of the most misunderstood figures in radical politics. John Fielden and the Politics of Popular Radicalism 1832-1847 is a model of its kind, compulsively readable, thoroughly documented, with footnotes where they should be, at the foot of the page. Fielden emerges as a character of considerable stature and strong principles. A rich-at-times extremely rich – man, he spent his time, energy and a considerable part of his fortune attempting, through Parliamentary means, to have controls placed on the Industrial system of which he was a leading representative. In an age in which radicals held that political power was the key to social improvement, he believed that legal intervention could ensure that industrialization would benefit the entire community.

A free trader in most economic matters, he did not extend these principles to the labour market or to human relations in general. His proposals for trade boards and wage regulation for handloom weavers, like his opposition to the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act and its implementation, or his agitation for a ten-hour working day for factories, were based on his knowledge of industry and the industrial communities and were opposed to the dogmas of academic political economy. In Parliament he differed from nearly all his fellow radicals in his consistent refusal to be drawn into siding with either of the two political parties. A supporter

of radical causes up to and during the early years of the Chartist movement, he withdrew somewhat after the events of 1839 and 1840, though never disavowing Chartism. He remained on friendly terms with O'Connor and other leading Chartists and was always ready to defend those who were arrested and to present petitions to the House. He introduced a motion for the repeal of the Act of Union with Ireland early in his parliamentary career and consistently opposed every coercion bill.

Even more than Duncombe and Wakley, the other two Chartist MPs, Fielden spoke consciously for extra-parliamentary radicalism and for the interests of labour as he saw them. What is more, in his active opposition to the implementation of the New Poor Law in his own part of Lancashire, he employed and advocated tactics of mass demonstration and the withdrawal of labour which were those of the most militant Chartists. Weaver offers a perceptive and convincing examination of the tactics and rhetoric of the popular radicalism of these years that could hardly be bettered, and in so doing places John Fielden where he belongs, among its major figures.

Alex Tyrrell's *Joseph Sturge and the Moral Radical Party in Early Victorian Britain* suffers to some extent by comparison. Considerably shorter, it nevertheless attempts to deal with many more issues. The result is a rather scrappy account, cut up into very short chapters, and remorselessly confined to the viewpoint of its subject. There is little attempt to place Sturge in the general context of nineteenth-century political and social thought and action, and where such attempts are made, for example in his relations with the Chartist movement, they are woefully inadequate. Although both books, as good biographies should, present their subjects in a sympathetic light, Professor Tyrrell seems on too many occasions to accept his subject's moralism at face value. The picture of Anti-Corn Law Leaguers reduced to inarticulacy by tears when describing working-class living conditions, is singularly unconvincing, given their attitudes in other circumstances. As Weaver shows, thelachrymose John Bright was one of the chief exponents of the legal limitation of child labour in the factories. Sturge was a more consistent and attractive figure than Bright, but he still emerges from this study as opinionated and self-righteous. Like Fielden, he was extremely rich – "Have you a California of your own?" Cobden once asked him, with perhaps a tinge of envy – but we are given little information about his political use of his funds. No mention is made, for example, of his use of money to establish alternative groups to the mainstream Chartists in Birmingham, although "Sturge milk" – to use one Chartist's phrase – undoubtedly tempted more than one hard-up activist into the Sturge camp.

Although he stood for parliament on several occasions, Sturge never became an MP. He tended to look higher for possibilities of political influence, to approach members of the government directly and even, on occasion, heads of state, including the Tsar. In his last decade, in the jingoistic years surrounding the Crimean War, much of his influence was exercised on behalf of the Peace Society. He laid out a great deal of money and effort in helping to found and support a daily newspaper, the *Morning Star*, to carry the message of Christian pacifism. It would be interesting to have a fuller account of these years. Indeed, Alex Tyrrell might have been better advised to expand some sections of his work rather than attempt the impossible task of covering all the many interests and activities of his subject in a short book.

*Politics and Social Change in Modern Britain: Essays presented to A. F. Thompson*, edited by P. J. Waller (236pp. Brighton: Harvester, £30. 07108 1133 0) contains nine essays by various contributors on topics including the adoption of social reform as a Conservative cause; changes within the Liberal Party (1890-1918); the Labour Party and its relation to capitalism and the National Debt; the social psychology of unemployment between the First and Second World Wars; trade unionism, both regular and irregular; the rise of the movement for women's higher education; and dialect and speech in relation to class.



Beggan's poster, 1896, for Rowntree's is taken from *The Chocolate Conscience*, reviewed here.

# Nourishing industry

Brian Fothergill

GILLIAN WAGNER  
The Chocolate Conscience  
178pp. Chatto and Windus. £18.95.  
070112475X

It was predominantly teetotal Quakerism that launched many thousands of cups of cocoa and bars of chocolate on the British public, and at the same time inspired a movement for industrial and social reform that did much, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, to ameliorate the worst excesses of the Industrial Revolution and to foster what might be called the acceptable face of capitalism. Gillian Wagner has traced this development in the histories of the three great chocolate dynasties of Fry, Cadbury and Rowntree. She has called her book *The Chocolate Conscience*, which is something of a misnomer, for the dissolute, crumbling nature of chocolate hardly suggests the solid rock of Quaker principle that formed the consciences and characters of these magnates and supported their particular brand of enlightened paternalism.

Barred from the professions by restrictive legislation still in force against Dissenters and Catholics, many Quakers turned their hands to trade in the middle years of the eighteenth century, the period when Joseph Fry began dealing in cocoa in Bristol, to be followed by Joseph Rowntree at York and George Cadbury in Birmingham some decades later. Membership of the Religious Society of Friends, to which all three families adhered, gave an additional incentive to business success, since failure resulted in expulsion from the Society. Their beliefs, however, also inclined them to take a benevolent interest in the welfare of their employees at a time when mere profit-making was the sole objective of most entrepreneurs. Excessive wealth, indeed, Quakers considered something of an embarrassment as well as a responsibility. Both Rowntree and Cadbury believed that their money should be spent in their own lifetime, preferring distribution to bequest. In this they

shared Andrew Carnegie's view that a man of wealth "becomes the mere trustee and agent of his poorer brethren".

Their idealistic views did not, of course, prevent these men from dying as millionaires any more than it did Carnegie, but it ensured that their employees were better cared for in health, social welfare and housing than most of their contemporaries. Indeed, Lady Wagner's account of the model communities established by the Cadburys at Bournville and the Rowntrees at New Earswick, and their networks of charitable trusts, forms the most interesting part of her study. The Cadburys' venture into the world of the press forms a less happy story. The desire to disseminate liberal and humanitarian views through the medium of the "cocoa press" created as many problems as it attempted to solve. How, for example, does one reconcile a Quaker distaste for gambling with a paper that relies for its circulation on betting tips? The ideals of Quakerism and the crude values of Fleet Street did not mix, and it was here, some might think, that the chocolate conscience began to melt. The closure of the *News Chronicle* by Laurence Cadbury in 1960, in which 3,500 people lost their jobs without warning, hardly reflected his fellow Quaker Joseph Rowntree's dictum that "the best form of philanthropy was a well-run business making profits for the good of all".

The author is not always careful over dates. According to her reckoning Joseph Fry was only seven when he was admitted a Freeman of Bristol, and Ackworth School was founded in 1779, not 1799. She has, however, provided an interesting survey of a fascinating experiment in industrial relations which has left its mark on the social climate of the twentieth century. J. B. Priestley, after a visit to the Cadbury factories in 1933, saw in the type of paternalism practised by the cocoa barons a danger that the workers risked losing their spirit of independence, seeing their work as an end in itself rather than as a means to an end. The same argument applies to all forms of paternalism, whether political or industrial. Gillian Wagner's book is no less relevant today than it was fifty or a hundred years ago.

# Growth without grime

Desmond King-Hele

MAUREEN MCNEIL  
Under the Banner of Science: Erasmus Darwin and his age  
307pp. Manchester University Press. £27.50.  
0719014921

Erasmus Darwin achieved so much in so many intellectual disciplines that he has no chance of being fully appreciated in the age of specialization. No one today has the breadth of knowledge to see all his achievements in perspective relative to modern attainments. One scholar may be able to appreciate his exposition of biological evolution, but not his obsessive creativity in mechanical invention. Another may reveal his surprising power over the Romantic poets, and yet be unable to explain his pre-eminence as a doctor. A third may concentrate on his talent for making friends and creating societies, and perhaps ignore his patient, solitary work on botanical classification and word-creation, or his success as the leading English poet of the mid-1790s.

What Maureen McNeil gives us is "a complex picture of Darwin in his full historical setting" in a book which is well written, closely argued and richly documented, the 209 pages of text being supported by ninety-eight pages of notes, bibliography and index. There are four main historical themes: Darwin in relation to the Industrial Revolution; to the French Revolution (and the idea of progress); to the contemporary medical world; and to the Agricultural Revolution. Each theme is allocated two chapters.

The most interesting and original chapters are those on Darwin's role in the rise of the Midlands industries. Soon after beginning practice as a physician at Lichfield in 1756, he met Matthew Boulton: they became lifelong friends, and from their meetings grew the informal gatherings later known as the Lunar Society, where Darwin acted as a man of ideas and the spark of innovation. By encouraging his close friends in the group, particularly Boulton, Watt and Wedgwood, he helped to promote the advance of the industries which he later celebrated in his highly successful poem "The Botanic Garden" (1789-92). This not unfamiliar story is reinterpreted by McNeil. What is missing in Darwin's poem, she says, "is any sense of the labour processes involved in industry; the labourer's role in the production process was totally ignored". Darwin gave his learned readers a favourable impression of industry by half-defining it in terms of "the triumphs of industry".

*Ancient Medicine: Selected papers of Ludwig Edelstein*, edited by Owsen Tenkin and C. Lillian Tenkin, has now been released in paperback (456pp. Johns Hopkins University Press. £10.95. 0-8018 3491 0). The book was first published in 1967, and the selection and arrangement of the articles, as the Editors explain in their introduction, were guided by Edelstein's own wishes. Among the essays included are "The role of Erysimachus in Plato's *Symposium*", "Greek Medicine in its Relation to Religion and Magic", "The Diagnostics of Antiquity", "The Distinctive Hellenism of Greek Medicine" and "The History of Anatomy in Antiquity".

So with strong arm immortal BRINDLEY leads his long canals, and parts the velvet meads.

In reality, the strong arms were those of the sweating navigators and the "hands" at the machines, but Darwin scarcely noticed the implications of the change from "manufacture" to "machinofacture". McNeil goes on to show how, by his silence about the grief and grime of toil, Darwin "transformed the growing potency of Midlands men of industry and science into a generalised cultural optimism". In his poem he hijacked myth to serve science and technology, and offered an exhilarating vision of human power and progress impelled ever forward and upward.

The second theme is the impact of the French Revolution and the subsequent anti-Jacobin fervour that was to wound Darwin so severely in the late 1790s. Here the discussion centres on the Lunar Society rather than on Darwin himself (nothing is said about his involvement with the Derby Society for Political Information in 1791-2). For Darwin the idea of progress was like a lifeboat in the world's stormy seas, and McNeil traces the development of

# Advancing by numbers

Jim Secord

WILLIAM B. PROVINCE  
Sewall Wright and Evolutionary Biology  
545pp. University of Chicago Press. £25.50.  
026684741  
SEWALL WRIGHT  
Evolution: Selected papers  
Edited by William B. Province  
649pp. University of Chicago Press. \$59.50  
(paperback, \$21.25).  
0266910339

Biographers of the living, those "vampires of literature", as Charles Babbage called them, have often had a bad press. It is remarkably difficult to retain sufficient critical distance from a subject who will also be a reader, especially if he is a scientist. Scientists are notorious for recasting their own histories in the light of following events. In science, the past is chiefly employed as a weapon in present controversies, so much so that any useful recollections would seem hopelessly coloured by a knowledge of what has been done since.

William B. Province's long-awaited biography of the American evolutionary biologist and population geneticist Sewall Wright presents a sustained challenge to this pessimistic view. Beginning in 1978, Province made a thorough effort to obtain Wright's recollections. He conducted taped interviews amounting to over 120 hours (although unfortunately there are no specific citations to these in the references). He telephoned Wright long-distance, sometimes several times a day, and was given access to all correspondence from 1915 onwards. Wright read his manuscript in draft and commented extensively on it. In all, Province says, Wright devoted several hundred hours to the making of the book.

The result, it should be said immediately, is a superb piece of work. The benefits of Province's discussions with Wright are most evident in the first half of the book, which focuses on his career. He entered the study of genetics in the

early years of the twentieth century, a period when the basic evolutionary mechanism was the subject of heated discussion. Naturalists, geneticists and mathematical population biologists all disagreed sharply, sometimes to the point where their writings seem to have been mutually unreadable or simply irrelevant. As Province shows, Wright was one of the key figures in bringing together the fields of physiological genetics and mathematical population genetics. He thus played a central part in the so-called "evolutionary synthesis" of the 1930s and 40s. A particularly important paper of 1931, "Evolution in Mendelian Populations", developed what Wright termed the "shifting balance" theory of evolution.

Among other things, this argued that optimal conditions for evolutionary advance occurred in large populations of organisms subdivided into partially isolated local races. It also led Wright into one of the most famous controversies in twentieth-century biology, particularly a long dispute with the Cambridge-trained R. A. Fisher. As it turned out, Wright's emphasis on localized races proved particularly effective for the kind of studies appropriate to field natural history, and it was Theodosius Dobzhansky's extensive use of Wright's approach in his *Genetics and the Origin of Species* in 1937 that for the first time made the mathematical approach of the population geneticists intelligible to biologists at large.

Province discusses all these developments with a sure hand and in generally non-mathematical treatment. (Like Dobzhansky, who was willing to take calculations on trust and told Wright that "papa knows best", the reader is not overburdened with equations.) Much of the technical material, though, is certainly intended for those with some background in evolutionary biology. For specialists who want the full story, Province has also edited a very useful volume containing Wright's collected papers on evolution.

Province's clear, convincing account of the history of Wright's work is not, however, the only part of the book. How successful

of writing about the living? He is certainly critical of some of Wright's own ideas, and on the important issue of the shifting balance theory (especially in relation to genetic drift) he shows that Wright has himself shifted ground. In general, however, Province's sensibilities are close enough to those of Wright for deeper disagreements to be avoided. The interaction between author and subject has proved fruitful partly because Province has few strongly expressed positions on historical causation, nor any sociological, psychological or other theoretical kites to fly. In fact, his overall view of Wright's part in the history of the evolutionary synthesis is favourable enough to satisfy even the most touchy subject, the last sentence predicts that "historians and biologists in the twenty-first century will look upon Wright as perhaps the single most influential evolutionary theorist of this century". Province has gone far to document this claim, for much of Wright's work was quietly conducted behind the scenes. But I am not sure that the notion of individual "influence" represents a helpful way of assessing so complex an enterprise as twentieth-century evolutionary thought. More generally, it is arguable how great a proportion of historical work on twentieth-century science is best devoted to individuals, rather than schools, research teams and national traditions. Province has written a comprehensive and definitive biography of Wright, but it is unfair to his enterprise to call it (as the dust-jacket does) "a conceptual history of genetics in relation to evolutionary theory in this century".

At the beginning of his book, Province notes that most scientists are alive now than have lived in all previous centuries combined. He recommends that historians begin to interview them on an unprecedented scale, in what might be called a kind of biographical "rescue archaeology". For one will continue to study the dead. But in his thoroughness and interest, *Sewall Wright and Evolutionary Biology* suggests the fruits that historical study of very recent science can bring.

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## Stock in raid

### Greer Phillips

T. BOONE PICKENS, JR.  
Boone  
304pp. Hodder and Stoughton. £12.95.  
0340415217

A large American corporation typically is managed by a hierarchical bureaucracy of executives, many of whom own relatively little stock in the corporation. These managers may or may not be competent. Those that are, because they lack a real equity interest in the corporation, may well be more interested in improving their position amid the delicate gamesmanship of the bureaucracy than in improving the profits or the stock price.

The weaknesses of American management are obvious in (and bewailed by) many. One man, T. Boone Pickens, Jr., has transmuted his contempt for management into profits of hundreds of millions of dollars. His autobiography describes the development and execution of the strategy that would gain him notoriety as the corporate raider *par excellence*.

Pickens began his career in 1951 as a geologist with Phillips Petroleum, his first and last job with a firm in which he did not hold a major interest. He watched Phillips executives make patently uneconomic decisions in order to protect or promote themselves; a telling example cited here is a decision by a particular department to proceed, at considerable cost, with the

drilling of a well that contained a less than commercially viable amount of oil, in order to avoid making a formal admission that the well was a dry hole.

Disgusted with the corporate bureaucracy, Pickens left Phillips in 1954 to start his own oil and gas business. From 1954 to 1983, he developed his company, Mesa Petroleum, into a substantial concern, while sharpening his dislike for the self-interested conduct of the executives of other mid-sized oil companies who declined to merge their (relatively poorly managed and unprofitable) operations with Mesa.

In 1983, with the OPEC-driven oil boom waning and Mesa in serious need of money, Pickens decided to act on his conviction that large oil companies were mismanaged; the result was the brilliantly conceived raid on Gulf Oil Corporation. Gulf was badly run and the market knew it; as a consequence, its stock price prior to Pickens's involvement was only some 40 per cent of the value of its underlying assets. In effect, the remaining 60 per cent represented money on the table for anyone who could buy Gulf stock and convince (or force) Gulf to restructure in a manner that would increase its stock price. Mesa duly bought a substantial block of Gulf stock, while proposing that Gulf use a so-called royalty trust to improve the position of its shareholders. The panic-stricken management of Gulf, after several months of useless and extremely expensive floundering around, sought re-

fuge in a merger with Standard Oil of California; as a result of the merger, Mesa and its co-investors made a pretax profit of \$760 million.

Since Gulf, Pickens has used his buy-in-and-sow-panic strategy on several other lamentably managed companies, always to the great profit of himself and his partners—at least until his latest investment, in Newmont Mining Corporation, ran afoul of the recent stock market crash. *Boone* contains extensive and entertaining blow-by-blow descriptions of each of these confrontations, particularly amusing for Pickens's frequently vitriolic characterizations of his opponents (one favourite is described as "irrational" and "corporate America's biggest . . . ego").

Pickens is quick to point out that his various raids have benefited the other shareholders of the target corporations. Indeed, he displays a virtual reverence for the shareholder, whom, to his mind, management ignores. While this pro-shareholder ideology may be taken with some scepticism (after all, Mesa makes its money by buying undervalued shares from some of those shareholders), Pickens's consistent espousal of it throughout the book serves to unify and enliven what might otherwise have been a mere recital of deals done.

While Pickens is at pains to demonstrate that his activities are good for the other shareholders of the corporations he engages with, his book has little to say about whether they are good or bad for the American economy as a whole. This reticence seems curious in the light of the argument currently being made, that the need to avoid the attentions of Pickens and similar corporate raiders, in conjunction with a variety of other factors, pressures managers into undesirable "short-termism" (that is, the making of decisions that will increase the earnings and stock price of the corporation now but will have adverse consequences later). Pickens



T. Boone Pickens, Jr., with his grandson, Michael, reproduced from the book reviewed here.

might respond that decisions taken with the money of current shareholders must be designed to maximize the return to those shareholders; shareholders are not investing in a charity for their grandchildren. Alternatively, he might say that corporate management never makes decisions on the basis of longer-term consequences and that the activities of the raiders have merely acted to shift management's attention from its own short-term interests to those of the shareholders. Given the importance of the discussion and Pickens's chosen role as a goad to management, it is a pity not to have had his views.

## Rotten apples, leaky barrel

### J. H. C. Leach

IAN HAY DAVISON  
Lloyd's: A View of the Room: Change and disclosure  
238pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £14.95.  
0297791044

From 1983 to 1985 Ian Hay Davison was Chief Executive and Deputy Chairman of the Corporation of Lloyd's. In *Lloyd's: A View of the Room* he explains to the outsider the arcane workings of this famous institution, and just how they led to the grave abuses which prompted the internal investigation which resulted in the Fisher Report; to Davison's appointment at the instance of the Bank of England; and to the Nell Report, product of a government-appointed commission, which followed on Davison's resignation. In particular, Davison describes the functioning of the firms of underwriting agents, whose activities are perhaps the least understood component of Lloyd's.

The abuses involved the "plundering" of Davison's word—of at least £55 million from the "Names" at Lloyd's (that is, the external underwriting members who provide essential capital but whose working life lies elsewhere) by agents. Agents in many cases appeared to be oblivious to or ignorant of the basic rules of the law of agency—principally those concerning conflicts of interest and the duty to account, and those prohibiting secret profits. Davison makes it very clear that there are those who have paid heavily for the privilege of becoming a Name at Lloyd's, with all that that entails by way of unlimited liability on the one hand but substantial underwriting profits—for most of the time—on the other. But what could those Names know of the profitable "baby" syndicates from which they were excluded or, until too late, of the scandals surrounding certain now notorious brokers and agents? Davison reveals an unedifying story of self-interest, servility to the Council of members, from which they were excluded—and whose misdeeds, real or suspected, they were there to protect.

duties; of possible tax evasion; of a Council which included members whose interests were anything but such as to favour reform, and three of whom subsequently faced disciplinary charges; of managing agents of the external members linked far too closely with brokers; and, indeed, a whole host of unsavoury practices which virtually ensured that the external members of Lloyd's would not get a fair deal.

Davison tells us, in admirably dispassionate language, of his struggle to direct sunshine on the mists previously obscuring Lloyd's to bring about many desirable changes, to upgrade the staff, to ensure, above all, that the business of Lloyd's would be carried out in such a manner that the external members would not be harmed by practices which could only flourish in a milieu where concealment was the norm. His task was anything but easy. There were those who resented his appointment. His relations *vis-à-vis* the Chairman and the other Deputy Chairmen—who were, of course, members of Lloyd's, which Davison was not—were, inevitably, often strained. He had thought that his task would be to pick out the rotten apples from a barrel, but found that there were those who believed the barrel itself to be contaminated. He was trying to bring about a "single-capacity" structure in an organization which had long thrived happily on dual or multi-capacity, and to do so at a time when the Stock Exchange was moving in exactly the opposite direction. He was in short the agent of change in an ultra-conservative and highly secretive organization.

The book is not always easy reading, since some of the practices described, and their remedies, are in themselves complex—indeed, so complex were the misdemeanours that no charges of fraud have, at this writing, been laid against the perpetrators. But the reader is left in no doubt that Davison had much to do, that much has been done and, it must be said, that for all his efforts and those of Sir Patrick Nell, much still remains to be done. Yet history may well say that Davison's tenure of the post of Chief Executive and, no less, his resignation from it, were to prove the desirable and necessary catalyst of change at one of England's greatest, and most unusual, financial institutions.

## In and out of the language lab

### Roy Harris

LOUIS-JEAN CALVET  
*La Guerre des langues et les politiques linguistiques*  
294pp. Paris: Payot. 180 fr.  
FREDERICK J. NEWMAYER  
*The Politics of Linguistics*  
171pp. Chicago University Press. £21.25.  
0265577201

Linguists, unlike their colleagues in the natural sciences, have never claimed to be investigating just material elements and processes. Language is a form of human activity. Furthermore, it is a form of political activity in the broadest sense. Whether the polity in question be that of family, village, caste, occupation, tribe or state, every linguistic act is an act of political engagement. And the study of language, as J. R. Firth once remarked, requires language to be "turned back upon itself". Hence any demand for a linguistics which is totally apolitical verges on self-contradiction. How can the linguist *qua* linguist lay claim to that neutrality? Is there any viewpoint from which language can be studied which is not already a political viewpoint? If not, the politics of language and the politics of linguistics are inextricably intertwined.

Any suspicion of political involvement has always been an embarrassment in Western academia, a whiff of the unwashed in the classroom. So in order to obtain recognition as a "science", modern linguistics was forced to adopt a style of theorizing which divorced language from politics as far as was reasonable or plausible. A science of human speech had to be seen to be as far "above" politics as physics and chemistry were deemed to be. How to achieve that respectable elevation was the problem.

The "solution" adopted at the inception of modern linguistics is well known; and well known to be question-begging. It involves accepting the rigid Saussurean distinction between an "internal" and an "external" linguistics, along with the concomitant distinction between *langue* and *parole*. The intended effect of this is to guarantee the linguist a politically neutral laboratory ("internal linguistics") within which to operate as a linguistic "scientist". Into this laboratory no political considerations of any kind, allegedly, intrude; and what goes on there is simply the expertly conducted dissection of the structure of languages. The methods of dissection employed are completely objective and unbiased. The linguistic scalpel is thoroughly sterilized before the operation. To what use will the linguistic community put the anatomical discoveries revealed by the scalpel? That is of no concern within the laboratory. For whatever pertains to the linguistic community, rather than to the anatomy of linguistic structure itself, belongs to "external linguistics".

The Saussurean thesis that the anatomy of *langue* takes priority over any study of *parole* went hand in hand with the claim that the anatomy of *langue* results in purely descriptive scientific statements. It became important for the linguist to insist that these statements contain no prescriptive implications of any kind. In other words, the requirement that modern linguistics should be "above" politics entailed also that it should be "above" education. For education; and in particular linguistic education, is nothing if not a political process, as the struggle for literacy in the modern world amply attests. Hence the constant reiteration by twentieth-century academic linguists of what has become a *topos* in the textbooks: linguistics does not tell people how they ought to speak or write. Linguistics passes no value judgments; it does not rule for distinguishing between "correct" and "incorrect" usage, neither recommends literacy nor disparages it. By thus deliberately distancing themselves from the schoolteachers, linguistic theorists thought they had established the ultimate *bona fides* of their professional, apolitical stance.

This has remained the official credo of departments of general linguistics in Western universities throughout the present century. But it has crept hidden with internal inconsistencies. These inconsistencies are in large part responsible for, as well as being reflected in, the book reviewed here, Frederick Newmeyer's *The Politics of Linguistics* is a pro-fused

defence of the orthodox doctrine, while Louis-Jean Calvet's *La Guerre des langues* attempts to come to terms with the fact that all forms of language planning, however "linguistically" expert, are forms of political interference. Both authors hang their heads repeatedly against the walls of the same paradigm of linguistic science and scientific activity.

*La Guerre des langues* is a book of wide-ranging and well-documented discussion. Its spectrum of linguistic politics extends from the cultural revolution in Mao's China to radio education programmes for the Jivaro Indians of Ecuador. The presentation is based in nearly all cases not on second-hand sources but on the globe-trotting author's remarkably extensive inquiries into linguistic situations in various corners of the world. Admirable though this out-and-about panoramic quality may be, and preferable though it is to the sit-at-home-with-statistics approach, it inevitably prompts certain doubts. Just how much can any intellectual Cook's tour tell us about the politics of cultural contexts so remote from our own? Is the result not a projection of our own political conceptualizations on to linguistic communities where they may not be appropriate? These questions lurk in the background throughout *La Guerre des langues*. They are never explicitly discussed, although the reader may well see them reflected in the varied quality of the writing. What Calvet has to say about linguistic attitudes sounds much more immediately convincing when he is reporting anecdotally on his conversations with the old lady who still speaks the Provençal patois of her village near Nice than when he is telling us about the results of handing out linguistic questionnaires to his Chinese students in Canton. The difference is revealing. In one case he is getting his information as an insider, a neighbour, a fellow member of French society. In the other case he is getting his information as an outsider, a trained sociolinguist and a foreigner.

Differences of this macrocultural order do not even surface in *The Politics of Linguistics*. The politics Newmeyer is concerned with turn out to be the rather narrow politics of American academic life. He makes the odd reference to Europe, to Hitler and to Stalin, but his main purpose is to provide a political apology for the version of "autonomous linguistics" developed by generative grammarians from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. This apology starts from the basic premise that the "autonomous linguists" of the US are the good guys. Critics of autonomous linguistics are precast in one or other of two roles. Either they must be old-fashioned, fuddy-duddy "humanists"; or else they must be "Marxists". No other political positions are available for linguists in Newmeyer's chauvinistic little scenario. What motivates the Marxists requires no comment; while the humanists represent the reactionary forces of "elitist opposition".

The argument of Newmeyer's book suffers in clarity from the fact that the term "autonomous linguistics" allows a persistent conflation of at least three separate theses: (i) that each language is an autonomous system, (ii) that language is an autonomous human activity, and (iii) that languages and/or language can only be studied by autonomous methods. Clearly these three theses do not necessarily go together; and if autonomous linguists believe they do, then autonomous linguistics is in a sorry muddle.

Sorting out this muddle, however, is not Newmeyer's agenda. His principal problem is to explain why, in spite of the professionally attested stance of autonomous linguistics, the autonomous linguists are really on the political side of the angels. The explanation takes the form of a garbled history of twentieth-century linguistics. This begins with Saussure and the structuralists. Structuralism is rapidly transported from Europe to America. By the time it reaches the Statue of Liberty it has miraculously become "egalitarianism"; or, rather, it there joins forces with the home-grown variety of linguistic egalitarianism already propounded by that doyen of American linguistics, Franz Boas. "From the beginning", we are told, "American structuralists hit upon egalitarianism as the cause around which they could crystallize their professional identity." In Europe, alas, linguists "never made it an issue around which they could distinguish themselves professionally". So already in the 1920s, 1930s and

1940s, American linguists were both autonomous and egalitarians.

During the war, autonomous linguistics joined the holy crusade against totalitarianism, and even lent its support to certain varieties of "applied" linguistics. Innumerable GLs were taught how to ask for a hamburger in unpeopled different languages. In thus backing Uncle Sam's war effort, the linguists clearly chose the right side, because "both Nazi Germany and fascist Italy had officially condemned structuralism as incompatible with the ideology of the state". So the structuralists emerge with a politically impeccable war record, at least in the US. How many French Saussureans joined the Resistance we are not told.

Newmeyer's curtain then rises on post-war linguistics. The footlights dim, a fanfare of trumpets is heard, and the figure of Chomsky miraculously appears centre-stage, several times life size. Chomsky, Newmeyer announces, is "the leading exponent of autonomous linguistics in the world today". He is clearly the Messiah that all the good guys had long been waiting for, his coming foretold by Boas the Baptist (not to mention minor prophets like Bloomfield of Bethlehem, for whom the foundation of the Linguistic Society of America had been a landmark in the egalitarian movement). Chomsky's political credentials are presented as being impeccable. His life offers us "an unparalleled example of a consistent commitment to progressive causes". Unparalleled? Certainly. Didn't Chomsky oppose the Vietnam war? And "not just the war itself but also the liberal technocracy in America, which used progressive-sounding rhetoric to mask its commitment to the foreign policy assumptions that underlay the war". That is Newmeyer's ultimate accolade. Card-carrying Messiahs can't oppose "just the war". Even fuddy-duddy old humanists might do that.

Reading Newmeyer's political eulogy of Chomsky will strike many readers as roughly on a par with listening to a White House spokesman extol President Reagan's record as a world champion of democracy. It is an account which discreetly says nothing of Chomsky's line on the Khmer Rouge atrocities in Cambodia, nor of his role in the infamous Faurisson affair. Even less does it explain the bizarre logic by which his allegiance to anarcho-syndicalism nowadays counts as commitment to a "progressive cause". What lies behind Newmeyer's irrelevant attempt to whitewash Chomsky's personal views is the political embarrassment of having to admit that American generative linguistics in the 1950s was in large part the product of the Cold War, and its development at MIT substantially financed by US military funding. For these are facts which tarnish the halo of autonomous linguistics.

Why the military authorities in Washington ever thought that autonomous linguistics was a good investment is neither here nor there. The fact is that they did, and that their money was gladly taken by the linguists. The linguists in their turn could hardly have supposed that the cash value of their research was related to its potential utility for growing more cauliflower in generals' kitchen gardens. Nor could they have supposed that the evident military interest in their work had nothing at all to do with the specific type of linguistic model which generative linguistics was proposing. Whatever the level or extent of conscious complicity involved, it was clearly a complicity of a political nature; and it is precisely at this point that Newmeyer's concerns link up with Calvet's. If linguistics is a science, it can hardly claim to be a science magically exempt from the political principle that those who pay pipers can call tunes.

Both Calvet and Newmeyer discuss the much-publicized political controversy surrounding the activities of the Summer Institute of Linguistics. The SIL, an overtly evangelistic enterprise, probably has already more sound descriptive work on the languages of the world to its credit than MIT ever will have; but its linguists have been expelled from a number of countries on a motley variety of vague charges, ranging from drug-trafficking to being CIA agents. Manifestly, for whatever reason, the way the SIL pursues its linguistic investigations is construed by at least some of the communities investigated as political interference. Here Calvet's treatment—and, Newmeyer's—

interestingly different. For Calvet this is a classic illustration of the fact that no linguistics programme of any kind can be apolitical, however apolitical its proponents claim it to be or try to make it. This, in turn, ties in with his more general thesis that linguistics itself is a part of sociolinguistics (and not the reverse, as the terms misleadingly suggest). For Newmeyer, on the other hand, it is a cautionary tale of what happens when linguists do not stick to the scientific last of autonomous linguistics, but become embroiled in sociolinguistic concerns.

What neither Newmeyer nor Calvet appears to realize is his own failure to address the central question of whether or not any political apology for modern linguistics based on a division between "internal" and "external" linguistic phenomena was ever valid in the first place. (This is perhaps understandable in Newmeyer's case, for he quotes the famous Saussurean statement of the aims of linguistics only in an American mistranslation; but it is more surprising in Calvet's, particularly in view of his earlier book *Pouvoir et contre-Saussure*.) The crucial issue can be simply, albeit polemically, stated. Did linguistics ever have a politically neutral basis, or even the possibility of one? The European post-Renaissance concept of "a language" was from the outset a political concept, and "the grammar of a language" no less so. To insist on the worldwide imposition of these concepts as providing the only scientific approach in linguistic inquiry is, at the very least, to confuse science with cultural imperialism.

The proceedings of a conference held at the University of Strathclyde between July 4 and 6, 1986, have now been edited by Nigel Fabb, Derek Attridge, Alan Durant and Colin McCube and published as *The Linguistics of Writing: Arguments between language and literature* (325pp. Manchester University Press. £40; paperback, £11.50. 07190 2335 1). The aims of the conference, as Fabb and Durant explain in their introduction, were "to assess the achievements of the interdisciplinary study of literary language over the past quarter-century and to explore new directions for future work in the area". Among the papers reprinted here are: Stanley Fish, "Withholding the missing portion: power, meaning and persuasion in Freud's *The Wolf Man*"; Jonathan Culler, "Towards a linguistics of writing"; Jacques Derrida, "Some questions and responses"; "Stylistics and functionalism"; and David Lodge, "After Bakhtin".

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## Stock in raid

### Greer Phillips

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0340415207

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The abuses involved the "plundering" of Davison's word – of at least £55 million from the "Names" of Lloyd's (that is, the external underwriting members who provide essential capital but whose working life lies elsewhere) by agents. Agents in many cases appeared to be oblivious to or ignorant of the basic rules of the law of agency – principally those concerning conflicts of interest and the duty to account, and those prohibiting secret profits. Davison makes it very clear that there are those who have paid heavily for the privilege of becoming a Name at Lloyd's, with all that that entails by way of unlimited liability on the one hand but substantial underwriting profits – for most of the time – on the other. But what could these Names know of the profitable "baby" syndicates from which they were excluded or, until too late, of the scandals surrounding certain now notorious brokers and agents? Davison reveals an unedifying story of staff utterly subservient to the Council of members, from which they were excluded – and whose misdeeds, real or suspected, they were therefore afraid to expose: of poorly educated present authorities – and why.

duties; of possible tax evasion; of a Council which included members whose interests were anything but such as to favour reform, and three of whom subsequently faced disciplinary charges; of managing agents of the external members linked far too closely with brokers; and, indeed, a whole host of unsavoury practices which virtually ensured that the external members of Lloyd's would not get a fair deal.

Davison tells us, in admirably dispassionate language, of his struggle to direct sunshine on the mists previously obscuring Lloyd's to bring about many desirable changes, to upgrade the staff, to ensure, above all, that the business of Lloyd's would be carried out in such a manner that the external members would not be harmed by practices which could only flourish in a milieu where concealment was the norm. His task was anything but easy. There were those who resented his appointment. His relations *vis-à-vis* the Chairman and the other Deputy Chairmen – who were, of course, members of Lloyd's, which Davison was not – were, inevitably, often strained. He had thought that his task would be to pick out the rotten apples from a barrel, but found that there were those who believed the barrel itself to be contaminated. He was trying to bring about a "single-capacity" structure in an organization which had long thrived happily on dual or multi-capacity, and to do so at a time when the Stock Exchange was moving in exactly the opposite direction. He was in short the agent of change in an ultra-conservative and highly secretive organization.

The book is not always easy reading, since some of the practices described, and their remedies, are in themselves complex – indeed, so complex were the misdemeanours that no charges of fraud have, at this writing, been laid against the perpetrators. But the reader is left in no doubt that Davison had much to do; that much has been done and, it must be said, that for all his efforts and those of Sir Patrick Neill much still remains to be done. Yet history may well say that Davison's tenure of the post of Chief Executive, and, no less, his resignation from it, were to prove the desirable and necessary catalyst of change at one of England's greatest, and most unusual, financial markets.

## In and out of the language lab

### Roy Harris

LOUIS-JEAN CALVET  
La Guerre des langues et les politiques linguistiques  
294pp. Paris: Payot, 180 fr.  
FREDERICK J. NEWMAYER  
The Politics of Linguistics  
171pp. Chicago University Press, £21.25.  
0265577201

Linguists, unlike their colleagues in the natural sciences, have never claimed to be investigating just material elements and processes. Language is a form of human activity. Furthermore, it is a form of political activity in the broadest sense. Whether the polity in question be that of family, village, caste, occupation, tribe or state, every linguistic act is an act of political engagement. And the study of language, as J. R. Firth once remarked, requires language to be "turned back upon itself". Hence any demand for a linguistics which is totally apolitical verges on self-contradiction. How can the linguist *qua* linguist lay claim to that neutrality? Is there any viewpoint from which language can be studied which is not already a political viewpoint? If not, the politics of language and the politics of linguistics are inextricably intertwined.

Any suspicion of political involvement has always been an embarrassment in Western academia, a whiff of the unwashed in the classroom. So in order to obtain recognition as a "science", modern linguistics was forced to adopt a style of theorizing which divorced language from politics as far as was reasonable or plausible. A science of human speech had to be seen to be as far "above" politics as physics and chemistry were deemed to be. How to achieve that respectable elevation was the problem.

The "solution" adopted at the inception of modern linguistics is well known; and well known to be question-begging. It involves accepting the rigid Saussurean distinction between an "internal" and an "external" linguistics, along with the concomitant distinction between *langue* and *parole*. The intended effect of this is to guarantee the linguist a politically neutral laboratory ("internal linguistics") within which to operate as a linguistic "scientist". Into this laboratory no political considerations of any kind, allegedly, intrude; and what goes on there is simply the expertly conducted dissection of the structure of languages. The methods of dissection employed are completely objective and unbiased. The linguistic scalpel is thoroughly sterilized before the operation. To what use will the linguistic community put the anatomical discoveries revealed by the scalpel? That is of no concern within the laboratory. For whatever pertains to the linguistic community, rather than to the anatomy of linguistic structure itself, belongs to "external linguistics".

The Saussurean thesis that the anatomy of *langue* takes priority over any study of *parole* went hand in hand with the claim that the anatomy of *langue* results in purely descriptive scientific statements. It became important for the linguist to insist that these statements contain no prescriptive implications of any kind. In other words, the requirement that modern linguistics should be "above" politics entailed also that it should be "above" education. For education, and in particular linguistic education, is nothing if not a political process, as the struggle for literacy in the modern world amply attests. Hence the constant reiteration by twentieth-century academic linguists of what has become a *topos* in the textbooks: linguistics does not tell people how they ought to speak or write. Linguistics passes no value judgments, lays down no rules for distinguishing between "correct" and "incorrect" usage, neither recommends literacy nor disparages it. By thus deliberately distancing themselves from the schoolteachers' linguistic theonists: thought they had established the ultimate *bona fides* of their professional, apolitical stance.

This has remained the official credo of departments of general linguistics in Western universities throughout the present century. But it is a credo riddled with internal inconsistencies. These inconsistencies are in large part responsible for, as well as being reflected in, the two books reviewed here. Frederick Newmeyer's *The Politics of Linguistics* is a po-faced

defence of the orthodox doctrine, while Louis-Jean Calvet's *La Guerre des langues* attempts to come to terms with the fact that all forms of language planning, however "linguistically" expert, are forms of political interference. Both authors bring their heads repeatedly against the walls of the same paradigm of linguistic science and scientific activity.

*La Guerre des langues* is a book of wide-ranging and well-documented discussion. Its spectrum of linguistic politics extends from the cultural revolution in Mao's China to radio education programmes for the Jivaro Indians of Ecuador. The presentation is based in nearly all cases not on second-hand sources but on the globe-trotting author's remarkably extensive inquiries into linguistic situations in various corners of the world. Admirable though this out-and-about panoramic quality may be, and preferable though it is to the sit-at-home-with-statistics approach, it inevitably prompts certain doubts. Just how much can any intellectual Cook's tour tell us about the politics of cultural contexts so remote from our own? Is the result not a projection of our own political conceptualizations on to linguistic communities where they may not be appropriate? These questions lurk in the background throughout *La Guerre des langues*. They are never explicitly discussed, although the reader may well see them reflected in the varied quality of the writing.

What Calvet has to say about linguistic attitudes sounds much more immediately convincing when he is reporting anecdotally on his conversations with the old lady who still speaks the Provençal patois of her village near Nice than when he is telling us about the results of handing out linguistic questionnaires to his Chinese students in Canton. The difference is revealing. In one case he is getting his information as an insider, a neighbour, a fellow member of French society. In the other case he is getting his information as an outsider, a trained sociolinguist and a foreigner.

Differences of this macrocultural order do not even surface in *The Politics of Linguistics*. The politics Newmeyer is concerned with turn out to be the rather narrow politics of American academic life. He makes the odd reference to Europe, to Hitler and to Stalin, but his main purpose is to provide a political apologia for the version of "autonomous linguistics" developed by generative grammarians from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. This apologia starts from the basic premise that the "autonomous linguists" of the US are the good guys. Critics of autonomous linguistics are precast in one or other of two roles. Either they must be old-fashioned, fuddy-duddy "humanists"; or else they must be "Marxists". No other political positions are available for linguists in Newmeyer's chauvinistic little scenario. What motivates the Marxists requires no comment; while the humanists represent the reactionary forces of "elitist opposition".

The argument of Newmeyer's book suffers in clarity from the fact that the term "autonomous linguistics" allows a persistent conflation of at least three separate theses: (i) that each language is an autonomous system, (ii) that language is an autonomous human activity, and (iii) that languages and/or language can only be studied by autonomous methods. Clearly these three theses do not necessarily go together; and if autonomous linguists believe they do, then autonomous linguistics is in a sorry muddle.

Sorting out this muddle, however, is not on Newmeyer's agenda. His principal problem is to explain why, in spite of the professionally apolitical stance of autonomous linguistics, the autonomous linguists are really on the political side of the angels. The explanation takes the form of a garbled history of twentieth-century linguistics. This begins with Saussure and the structuralists. Structuralism is rapidly transported from Europe to America. By the time it reaches the Statue of Liberty it has miraculously become "egalitarianism"; or, rather, it there joins forces with the home-grown variety of linguistic egalitarianism already propounded by that doyen of American linguistics, Franz Boas. "From the beginning", we are told, "American structuralists hit upon egalitarianism as the cause around which they could crystallize their professional identity." In Europe, they realize their "never made it an issue around which they could distinguish themselves professionally". So already in the 1920s, 1930s and

1940s, American linguists were both autonomists and egalitarians.

During the war, autonomous linguistics joined the holy crusade against totalitarianism, and even lent its support to certain varieties of "applied" linguistics. Innumerable GLs were taught how to ask for a hamburger in unprintable different languages. In thus backing Uncle Sam's war effort, the linguists clearly chose the right side, because "both Nazi Germany and fascist Italy had officially condemned structuralism as incompatible with the ideology of the state". So the structuralists emerge with a politically unimpeachable war record, at least in the US. How many French Saussureans joined the Resistance we are not told.

Newmeyer's curtain then rises on post-war linguistics. The footlights dim, a fanfare of trumpets is heard, and the figure of Chomsky miraculously appears centre-stage, several times life size. Chomsky, Newmeyer announces, is "the leading exponent of autonomous linguistics in the world today". He is clearly the Messiah that all the good guys had long been waiting for, his coming foretold by Boas the Baptist (not in mention minor prophets like Bloomfield or Bettelheim, for whom the foundation of the Linguistic Society of America had been a landmark in the egalitarian movement). Chomsky's political credentials are presented as being impeccable. His life offers us "an unparalleled example of a consistent commitment to progressive causes". Unparalleled? Certainly. Didn't Chomsky oppose the Vietnam war? And "not just the war itself but also the liberal technocracy in America, which used progressive-sounding rhetoric to mask its commitment to the foreign policy assumptions that underlay the war". That is Newmeyer's ultimate accolade. Card-carrying Messiahs can't oppose "just the war". Even fuddy-duddy old humanists might do that.

Reading Newmeyer's political eulogy of Chomsky will strike many readers as roughly on a par with listening to a White House spokesman extol President Reagan's record as a world champion of democracy. It is an account which discreetly says nothing of Chomsky's line on the Khmer Rouge atrocities in Cambodia, nor of his role in the infamous Fauntleroy affair. Even less does it explain the bizarre logic by which his allegiance to anarcho-syndicalism nowadays counts as commitment to a "progressive cause". What lies behind Newmeyer's irrelevant attempt to whitewash Chomsky's personal views is the political embarrassment of having to admit that American generative linguistics in the 1950s was in large part the product of the Cold War, and its development at MIT substantially financed by US military funding. For these are facts which tarnish the halo of autonomous linguistics.

Why the military authorities in Washington ever thought that autonomous linguistics was a good investment is neither here nor there. The fact is that they did, and that their money was gladly taken by the linguists. The linguists in their turn could hardly have supposed that the cash value of their research was related to its potential utility for growing more cauliflower in generals' kitchen gardens. Nor could they have supposed that the evident military interest in their work had nothing at all to do with the specific type of linguistic model which generative linguistics was proposing. Whatever the level or extent of conscious complicity involved, it was clearly a complicity of a political nature; and it is precisely at this point that Newmeyer's concerns link up with Calvet's. If linguistics is a science, it can hardly claim to be a science magically exempt from the political principle that those who pay pipers can call tunes.

Both Calvet and Newmeyer discuss the much-publicized political controversy surrounding the activities of the Summer Institute of Linguistics. The SIL, an overtly evangelistic enterprise, probably has already more sound descriptive work on the languages of the world to its credit than MIT ever will have; but its linguists have been expelled from a number of countries on a motley variety of vague charges, ranging from drug-trafficking to being CIA agents. Manifestly, for whatever reason, the way the SIL pursues its linguistic investigations is construed by at least some of the communities investigated as political interference. Here Calvet's treatment and Newmeyer's are

interestingly different. For Calvet this is a classic illustration of the fact that no linguistics programme of any kind can be apolitical, however apolitical its proponents claim it to be or try to make it. This, in turn, lies in with his more general thesis that linguistics itself is a part of sociolinguistics (and not the reverse, as the terms misleadingly suggest). For Newmeyer, on the other hand, it is a cautionary tale of what happens when linguists do not stick to the scientific last of autonomous linguistics, but become embroiled in sociolinguistic concerns.

What neither Newmeyer nor Calvet appears to realize is his own failure to address the central question of whether or not any political apologia for modern linguistics based on a division between "internal" and "external" linguistic phenomena was ever valid in the first place. (This is perhaps understandable in Newmeyer's case, for he quotes the famous Saussurean statement of the aims of linguistics only in an American mistranslation; but it is more surprising in Calvet's, particularly in view of his earlier book *Pour et contre Saussure*.) The crucial issue can be simply, albeit polemically, stated. Did linguistics ever have a politically neutral basis, or even the possibility of one? The European post-Renaissance concept of "a language" was from the outset a political concept, and "the grammar of a language" no less so. To insist on the worldwide imposition of these concepts as providing the only scientific approach to linguistic inquiry is, at the very least, to confuse science with cultural imperialism.

The proceedings of a conference held at the University of Strathclyde between July 4 and 6, 1986, have now been edited by Nigel Fabb, Derek Attridge, Alan Durant and Colin McCabe and published as *The Linguistics of Writing: Arguments between language and literature* (325pp. Manchester University Press, £40; paperback, £11.50. 0 7190 2335 1). The aims of the conference, as Fabb and Durant explain in their introduction, were "to assess the achievements of the interdisciplinary study of literary language over the past quarter-century and to explore new directions for future work in the area". Among the papers reprinted here are: Stanley Fish, "Withholding the missing portion: power, meaning and persuasion in Freud's *The Wolf Man*"; Jonathan Culler, "Towards a linguistics of writing"; Jacques Derrida, "Some questions and responses"; "Stylistics and functionalism" and David Lodge, "After Bakhtin".

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## Entertaining hopes

Anthony Sattin

**RONALD FRAME**  
A Woman of Judah: A novel and fifteen stories  
354pp. Bantam. £11.95.  
0 370 313 54

This is Ronald Frame's third book to be published in twelve months and, like his last novel, *Sandmouth People*, it seeks out another time — this time the 1930s — and another place — the town of Ivell Abbas "in a western county" — to tell a story of discovery. The outer frame for the narrative is a present-day one: an elderly judge, William Pendlebury, tells his story to a young writer in a single afternoon's sitting. The judge begins, makes a fake start, stops, begins again — "For life is lived, and endured", he says, "in the perpetual hope of the new beginnings we might make." There is an irony in this that is lacking elsewhere.

In the 1930s, the young lawyer Pendlebury

arrives in Ivell Abbas and meets the recently-installed Dr Davies and his young wife Vivian. He is a country doctor, an exceptional but for his inherited wealth. In the small community, she is considered rather too pretty — in her presence, people's thoughts turn to sex. They have a beautiful house and everything to live for, but there are shadows over them already. Defects about to be exposed, skeletons rattling in cupboards. The narrator is told that there are many things to be understood about the town — "A town is vertigo to look down into"; but vertigo or no, Pendlebury is drawn into looking by his infatuation with the young woman. As her pet admirer, he observes the townspeople's attitude towards her and sees the series of events which make up the story set into motion.

In his earlier novels and short stories, Frame was successful at creating period pieces; one of his great strengths is the use of significant detail to create atmosphere and character. The narrative is skilfully and economically manipu-

lated here, but, in spite of a legion of adjectives, Ivell Abbas remains what one of the stories also included in this volume calls "an England you could only read about now in Agatha Christie novels: pretty calendar towns". The characters in both the novel and the shorter stories are all well conceived — two suits, sheer stockings and a weakness for whisky or other indulgences. Almost all of them are trapped, looking for the new beginnings they might make: a writer observing the world from a restaurant table; a man watching Egypt go by from a Nile boat; another man not realizing that he is having sex with his daughter, wondering why she is so familiar. All feel that they are being propelled towards a moment of transformation or escape, but it never arrives, either for them or for the stories — new beginnings lead nowhere. Refusing catharsis, the dispassionate narrative voice adds a chilling tone to the futility of hoping, and it becomes noticeable that very few of these characters are able to laugh.

## Questers

Roz Kaveney

**ANDREW HARVEY**  
The Web  
269pp. Cape. £11.95.  
0 224 02446 9

Like its predecessor in his religious novel sequence, *Burning Houses*, Andrew Harvey's *The Web* risks the resentment of the less spiritual among his readers by so clearly having designs on us. For the greater part of its length it gets away with this simply because the quest for enlightenment is in so many respects here the subject of pure story as well as a mode of instruction. The three central figures of the last book journey in different directions and ways. Dying in Paris, the high-camp director Adolphe investigates Tibetan Buddhism and his dreams of a coming Messiah, and discusses destiny with the similarly dying heterosexual clairvoyant and arachnophile, Abdul. Anna celebrates the coming of middle age by returning to India to investigate past loves and beliefs. Charles is hired by Richard's mother, whom he loved and nobly disdained to seduce, to search Richard's past and journals for clues to his whereabouts, and does so in the partial hope of some fantasized consummation. Anna and Adolphe, and Adolphe and Charles, communicate by letter, both correspondents providing copies, this epistolary circling of the globe forming one of those webs to which the title refers — along with Abdul's non-spiritual preoccupations.

But spider-silk is spun from the entrails, and the book makes great play with this, particularly in its sardonic portrayal of Charles's self-serving altruistic fantasies. At one level this is an instructive joke, one of those many points in the text at which Harvey's wit aspires to become a vehicle for teaching, humour dressed in the garments of a Zen koan. At another, it is a statement about the book itself, and why even those who do not share the author's preoccupations will find it amusing and affecting. Three-dimensional and appealing, the characters are still clearly aspects of an authorial persona, their three quests clearly one quest, spun in different directions yet a unity.

The book ends with Anna announcing her discovery of total revelation, in the shape of a new teacher; both Adolphe and Charles drop what they are doing and jump on a jet. It remains to be seen whether this is merely the inartistic resolution of a philosophical problem, or the trailer for a third volume as interesting as this second one.

something interesting. The publishers, again, promise something "moving and powerful" taking place in the "hot dangerous deserts of the interior". But the sand of the interior billows in one's eyes as Laing and his camels trundle by. Nothing is left free of its qualifying adjectives, with the result that all is blurred. Some idlers are summoned to watch the opening of a box: "the strident buzzing of the flies throw on their solemnity" (even if one has managed to watch the scene from Laing's point of view, what does this mean?). On page after page there are such things as "for twenty-four hours he toiled ceaselessly at his correspondence" (why the adverb when the verb is strong?); "in the slow cautious speech that now was his, Laing . . ." (dialogue should describe itself).

"The slow funeral pace" pops up at one point: has there ever been a cortege which whirled along? In fact, this refers to Laing's "Mind", complemented by his "Body": a device which could work in the hands of a novelist adept at the creation of character and action, but here both are swamped by rumination, sentence after freighted sentence of it. An end to this muddled and lifeless novel in sight, it's time for the whole hog: "on its still dark surface the starry concave of the sky was perfectly reflected, so that he seemed to see the universe complete, its two halves sealed about by the dimly shining river".

## The noise of the text

Scott Bradfield

**MICHAEL WESTLAKE**  
Imaginary Women  
194pp. Manchester: Carcanet. £10.95.  
0 85635701 4

In the past twenty years critical theorists have been telling us a lot about textuality, intertextuality and the death of the author. Now authors are telling us too. There are no authors, no subjects, no novels; there is, instead, only language, and language is the "subject" of Michael Westlake's second "novel". People are paintings, movies, other books, Chinese ideograms — signs of things that may not be there, imaginary women. Individuals themselves don't actually "mean" anything. In fact, this is not even Michael Westlake's "novel" at all; rather, it is a heterogeneous "text", being read by heterogeneous readers involved in a scheme of shifting and indeterminate interpretations. It's a collage of fragments casually plundered from Barthes, Kristeva, Freud, Hammett, Malraux, Burroughs, Pynchon, Monty Python, Hitchcock, Cixous and Irigaray.

*Imaginary Women* is a noisy text. Words, like people, don't have to mean anything in it either: it's enough if they sound good. Westlake's is a language of puns, assonance and dissonance. His characters work for companies like "The . . .".

freedom — a "free" play of language, difference, undecidability, the deferral of "closure". Thus his fragmented and kaleidoscopic heroine ultimately becomes many women with many names. With a relentless critical glossary chattering at us page after page, we no longer feel we're reading a book. In this world people don't act, they only "write"; they don't feel emotions, but are "replayed from symbolic necessity"; they don't do things for any private purpose, but because they are "sensitive to the necessitation of the plot".

"Texts" like this often degenerate into random lists of shop-fronts, clothing, fruits, inventive no longer acts as a metaphor for war, but war as a metaphor for inventive; human suffering and death seem rather trivial compared to the power of language, or so one of Westlake's characters suggests when he asks, after being bombed by insurgents about his mother, "could their artillery do worse?". Texts and theories tend to imply that theory itself does the damage in our world, but theory only attempts to justify or explain that damage, which is actual. Perhaps critical theorists would do well to remember that.

The winner of the 1987 David Higham Prize for a first work of fiction is *The 13th House*, by Adam Zameczniak. The judges were Marilyn Jones, Jane Gardam and Ann Schlee; among other novels they wished to commend were *Give Them Stones*, by Mary Beckett; *The Levels*, by Peter Benson; and *Sunday Williams*, by Lindsay Clarke.

## No tricks or treats

Patricia Craig

**BERNARD MAC LAVEITY**  
The Great Profundo and other stories  
M3pp. Cape. £9.95.  
0 224 02483 3

"Dog-eared and a bit tatty": this phrase, applied by Bernard Mac Laveity to a character in the opening story of his new collection, somehow suits the general run of Mac Laveity's characters, as well as indicating the mood in which the stories are cast. They all deal with unsatisfactory lives, some — like that of the Great Profundo of the title — more bizarre than others. The man so styled, a sword-swallower by profession, suffers a lethal mishap in front of an unappreciative audience. Instead of putting on his usual street performance, he has been inveigled into entertaining a rowdy university club. He is really too old for the work. He and his partner, who carries a plastic bucket for the takings, barely scrape a living. Yet the Great Profundo (Frankie Taylor by name) owns a signed drawing of himself by Matisse. Mac Laveity, as ever, is on the look-out for ironies of circumstance or standpoint to ginger up the unalluring lives he evokes.

The people in the stories are downcast, anxious, ineffectual or adrift; their resources don't amount to very much — a recollection of something picturesque in the past, a flair for flute-playing, four lines of Emily Dickinson's to be revealed in. A very humdrum pathos surrounds their doings. "Words the happy say" — the woman who likes this poem has few words of her own, and clearly isn't happy. Ah, but that's the point: "The words the happy say / Are paltry melody / But those the silent feel / Are beautiful . . ." She brings the poem to be inscribed by a professional, a man very nearly as inarticulate and out of the swim as she is herself. What happens? He offers her a cup of

tea, she admires his work, and then goes off, "clutching . . . the parcel of her poem". It's a touching and a trivial encounter. Elsewhere, we have an old, blind, homosexual painter and the younger man who remains unresentfully attached to him; an elderly widow living in isolation; a schoolmistress unwilling to disarrange her routine ways.

In *The Great Profundo*, Mac Laveity tackles his themes with considerable delicacy but no wit; the briskness or exuberance which marked his earlier collections seems to have been toned down. The themes, indeed, boil down to one: the poignancy of the passes people come to. One story, "Death of a Parish Priest", is full to the brim with sentimental feeling. "Some Surrender" — a sterner tale — presents a more-or-less estranged couple, father and son, on a walk up the Cave Hill in Belfast. But would the father, described as a famous architect, really display such banal bigotry as we find uttered here? "You know the way you feel about Jews . . . That's what we think of Roman Catholics. There's something spooky about them." This is going too far, even for Belfast, given the character of the man. Besides, at seventy-five, he'd hardly need to explain his attitude to his son, who grew up in close contact with it, and, in reaction, took a different attitude himself.

This is an odd lapse from verisimilitude for Mac Laveity, whose assets include a faculty for close observation and a telling way with detail; he can suggest an entire way of life by alluding to some feature of the past, like a strong-willed mother, or some piece of squalor in the present — a burst sofa on a pavement, for example. He is firmly on the side of the awkward, the no-hopers, those deficient in luck or smartness; what interests him is the contrast between the appearances of such lives, and what actually animates them. The stories in his new collection show, by and large, what the Great Profundo claims for his act: genuineness and a lack of trickery.

## The novelist vanishes

Colin Greenland

**PAUL AUSTER**  
The New York Trilogy: City of Glass; Ghosts; The Locked Room  
314pp. Faber. £10.95.  
0 571 14925 1

Paul Auster's sequence of novels is a product of two long-associated genres, the detective story and the *nouveau roman*. The detective story provides a milieu in which a serious, dogged man in a raincoat meditates between two other people, a subject and an employer, to render an account of the one to the other, though neither may be what they seem. The *nouveau roman* insists that it, too, is solely interested in the facts, which theory can only deform and language betray. It dwells obsessively on fragments and cultivates an incapacity to choose between the proliferating interpretations. It is aggressively self-conscious and ruthlessly self-referential.

In each of Auster's stories one writer pursues another. In *City of Glass* a crime writer named Quin, tails Stillman, a mad philosopher; in *Ghosts* a detective called Blue, expert at the composition of his weekly reports, watches a man called Black who sits all day at a desk; writing; in *The Locked Room* an anonymous biographer searches for Fanshawe, a vanished novelist. In each story, too, writing is turned on itself and confounded. Quinn's preoccupation of being a detective consumes his ability to write detective stories; Blue comes to see his reports as pure fiction; and Fanshawe's hunter has no intention of ever writing the biography he researches so assiduously. Nor is it spoiling anyone's pleasure to reveal that one of the mysteries ever arrives at a solution, but each is instead relegated to a deeper level of mystery. There was no way to know, not this, not anything.

*City of Glass*, a story of the destructive shadow of a crime that perhaps never takes place, recalls the interminable street names and ill-remembered reuse of Alain Robbe-Grillet's *Les Gommes*, but also the world of Samuel Beckett, where everything, even purposeful action,

leads one to live in a dustbin. The mad philosopher's son, an albino waltz irreparably damaged by paternal experiments, has only one Lucky-like speech, a vast tumult of words about words and God and darkness. "If it was not night now," thinks Quinn at the last, naked and filthy in a bare white room, "then night would come later."

All of the characters in *Ghosts* have the names of colours, like codings on a circuit diagram, and all adopt disguises. When they speak, it is without quotation marks. There is a deliberate minimalism at work here, a desire to strip things down not to bare forked mortality but to simple formal relations, which Auster intermittently decorates with masks and mannerisms that no longer constitute personality. In this twilight, undifferentiated context there is finally no subject or object, only a free-standing, self-devouring text. "When Blue stands up from his chair, puts on his hat, and walks through the door, that will be the end of it."

*The Locked Room* is the only story that is satisfying as a whole, partly because it is the only one that pretends to be a whole. In it Auster preserves a naturalistic surface, imposing a continuous, coherent plot of a kind the anti-novelist of *City of Glass* would eschew, and confining his metaphors inside it. "In the end, each life is no more than the sum of contingent facts . . . of random events that disfigure nothing but their own lack of purpose"; but *The Locked Room* contrives to promise, almost to persuade us, that a line will be drawn and the sum will be totalled. Nevertheless, when we get there Fanshawe escapes and leaves us alone with the narrator and a notebook whose contents he chooses not to divulge. In its preference for plot, its reassuring melancholy, its precise but subdued style, *The Locked Room* recalls the recent work of Christopher Priest.

There is one more thing in the book, running throughout as a kind of ironic counterpoint to the stream of wonderful anecdotes, many of them literary, and all of them too good to verify. It is these bright bubbles of story, rather than the main current of anxiety and doubt, that will recompense Auster's work to memory.

## Goodness gone cold

Lesley Chamberlain

**ZDENA TOMIN**  
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210pp. Century Hutchinson. £11.95.  
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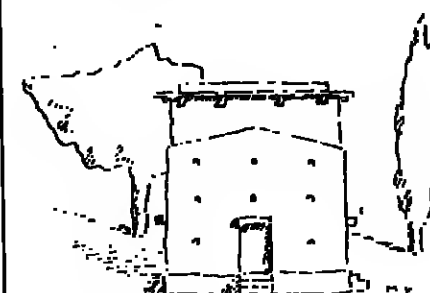
Checking daily to see whether you've still got your soul is one way to survive the moral cold of Eastern Europe, but too much soulfulness in a wintry land is an unbearable burden. So suggests Zdena Tomin — a Charter 77 signatory and novelist, deprived of her Czech citizenship, now living in London — in her second novel in English. In a city renowned for its sausages and sauerkraut and its castle on the hill, but where patient petitioning of the President in the name of democracy invites instant demonstrations of thuggery, the narrative of *The Coast of Bohemia* is taken up by a naïvely devoted member of the Citizens' Committee. This nameless, youngish woman has made her mark in favour of open protest but is now deeply troubled by non-belonging. She is used as a pawn by warring factions in the security police, and feels not much better treated by some of her co-signatories. In place of an active life she clings to the most vivid mental sensations. While the characters around her, like everyone's gentle bed-nurse Vladu and the flashy Dagmar, seem to thrive on the potency and glamour of non-conformism, she truly longs to realize herself in the alternative honest society, like a nun in search of Christ the bridegroom, and is all the more isolated.

Out of her urban Bohemian misery she projects Norma, her fantasy of a mentally-handicapped companion who calls her Funny. Norma attracts children and is welcome in the more independent-spirited countryside. For Norma the world consists of good people and dead. When this fantastic creature is happy she floats dreamily above the passive and corrupt city. When she is anxious she fears the vacuum cleaner will swallow her soul. But it's not only dissent that is unbinding Funny. She is also unattached, sexually dormant and an orphan. "Prissy missy dissy", a cunning secret policeman calls her. The ambivalence may not be intended, but because of Funny's funny mind, we're not sure that she is always telling the truth about the brutal functionaries and devious colleagues who, she alleges, are wrecking her life. The workings of her mind also make for some directionless, confusing reading.

Yet through Funny, Tomin has created a vivid picture of the comforting sleaziness and invigorating moral counterpoint of the stay-at-home, theoretical life that is forced on the sanest Eastern Bloc dissidents, and revealed the secret of why it might be worthwhile to have a university degree and yet take up window-cleaning. Funny also speaks for anti-heroism, and for the cold war in one country which has produced impressive moral resistance ("It's not the achievement that counts. It's the continuing presence of conscience.") Both themes consciously challenge newspaper versions of dissent. The thread which effectively pulls together the squalor, moral awareness and insane imagination in this strange book is, however, loneliness. Enter then the kindly, insensitive West, in the caricature form of a journalist.

London is the location for the least successful part of the novel. Peter Sanders is tough-minded, lipsick-eared, and wears his tie askew. He is more interested in a story than in his wife, and can't remember whether he slept with Funny the night she escaped across the border. The Sanderses look after Funny, but only until she has a mental breakdown in the spare room, at which point they despatch her to hospital. Tomin sees a London which is patronizing, ignorant and irritable. More constructive is the title's allusion to *The Winter's Tale*, which proposes a loose connection with Shakespeare's fantastic kingdom. Funny, temporarily removed from life like Hermione, is not unhappy in a home for displaced souls. Her therapy is to sculpt a new Norma, trusting that goodness can be preserved in stone until better times return.

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## THE TIMES Shadow writing

This year the Crime Writer's Association awarded the Golden Dagger for the best crime novel to Barbara Vine for *A Fatal Inversion*. Presumably the £500 cheque was made out in her real name of Ruth Rendell, author of the Wexford novels. Lesley Grant-Adamson talks to her this week in *The Times*



... and regularly in *The Times*, Bernard Levin on the way we live now, Irving Wardle at the theatre, Frances Gibb on the law, John Clare on education, Jane MacQuitty on wine, Barbara Amiel's viewpoint, Paul Griffiths on music, Jonathan Meades on eating out, the unique *Times* crossword . . . and a new daily game to test your vocabulary: Word-watching

THE TIMES  
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# NB

## American notes

### Christopher Hitchens

In 1934, a small but critically significant number of readers became acquainted with the needs and dreads of a small boy named David Scheer. Through the passages of a novel intriguingly entitled *Call It Sleep*, published almost by coincidence under the imprint of a forgotten firm at the promptings of a more confident friend, his author Henry Roth gained an audience that has never deserted him. David Scheer, the sensitive child of immigrants, pitched into a non-Jewish New York milieu, from many minds a fictional counterpart to *World of Our Fathers*. Shortly after this brief but intense moment of recognition, Roth turned in a new novel to Maxwell Perkins at Scribner's and then disappeared from view. The unfinished work bore the signs of a social realist proletarian effort, depicting the world of the German-American blue-collar toiler through the eyes of a character named Dan Loew.

By the time that *Call It Sleep* was rediscovered in the early 1960s, following the merits of its neglect by Alfred Kazin and Leslie Fiedler, Roth was half-way through a fifty-year writer's luck. Aged only twenty-seven at the time of the novel's first publication, he had ceased to believe in his own talent and had also succumbed to the paralyzing dogmas of the Communist Party. He removed himself to Maine, and subsequently to Albuquerque, New Mexico, where he lives in a mobile home living devoted most of his working life to anonymous and menial jobs.

Though he was gravely embarrassed by the 1974 revival of *Call It Sleep* in a best-selling Avon paperback edition, and sought to avoid the subsequent attention, Roth was in fact only a few years from a recovery of nerve. To read his own account of the recovery is almost like coming across an L-Dopa memoir. Having repressed his Jewish identity in favour of Marxism and assimilation, he found himself electrified by the Israeli victory in the war of 1967. And, though he remains an atheist and a critic of Zionism, he dates this moment as the end of a long period of sterile denial.

Many people who admire his prose are candidly astonished to learn that Roth is still alive. Even my friend David Mandel, who first published *Call It Sleep* "because nobody else would", was surprised to hear of Roth's re-emergence. On November 30, the Jewish Publication Society of Philadelphia brought off the coup of a collected edition. Entitled *Shifting Landscapes: A composite 1925-1987* (Jewish Publication Society, 1930 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia, PA 19103), it includes all the fragments that Roth has not burned or repudiated in the past half-century.

The collection, and the elucidating fragments of interview by which it is linked, are owed to the persistence of Mario Materassi, Professor of English at the University of Florence. Professor Materassi has stayed with his subject; translating *Call It Sleep* into Italian in 1964 (*Chiamolo sonno*) and producing an anthology entitled *Rothiana* in 1985.

Roth is still blinking a bit as he emerges into the light, but he has some unusual things to say—especially about the American Jewish experience. He attacks Saul Bellow for complacency about the diaspora, saying that:

[Bellow] has to cling to the untenable with the delirium. Sigmund Freud, he recalls reading, "once observed that America was an interesting experiment, but that he didn't believe it would succeed. Well, maybe not. But it would be base to abandon it." Is this, or is it not tantamount to saying that making aliyah to Israel is a base act? The Jew who does so abandons America, and hence his base. Bellow undoubtedly would protest that this was not the intent of his statement, and I trust it was not; nevertheless it is difficult to draw any other inference.

There must be the suspicion here that Roth is over-compensating for the years when he urged American Jews to forget their identity. He implies as much in his reflections on Joyce, interpolated here in a story that he failed to publish in 1939:

How were you different (cringing henchman of a paranoiac), seeking to dissociate yourself from fellow-Jews, but instead were a fervent defender of

"the oppressed and dispossessed and offensive" Arabs, the anti-nationalist internationalists—as Joyce, the universalist, pulled Ireland (and never wrote about anything else).

Included in *Shifting Landscapes* are some college magazine pieces, some overlooked contributions to the *New Yorker* and a possibly significant short story—"Somebody Always Cries the Purple"—which describes the stifling and thwarting of the creative impulse in a Jewish boy who frequents public libraries. Fittingly, many of the fragments first appeared in literary magazines that have long ceased to exist.

From his trailer park in New Mexico, Roth announces that he plans to complete the unfinished novel handed in to Scribner's fifty years ago. The boy David Scheer reappears, this time as "an entirely different, nasty little bastard". Dan Loew, the putative social realist hero, is recast as a ruined and solemn fellow. *Mercy of a Jude Stream*, it's called. This will not be the first time that one reflects on the frailty of popular quotations. At the age of eighty-one, Henry Roth shows that there are second acts in American lives.

A potentially nourishing controversy is in progress, concerning the attitude to poetry of the *Los Angeles Times*. Last April, the editor of that paper's *Book Review* announced that he would no longer be the publisher of regular poetry book reviews. The space thereby gained would be reserved for an actual poem, one that, according to the editor, Jack Miles, could be "appreciated by readers who haven't majored in English". The response was greater than Miles seems to have anticipated. The offices of the *LA Times* were picketed by literary protesters whose placards were as hackneyed as "LA Times bad to verse", and as elaborate as "We Want Poetry Consistently and Thoroughly Reviewed in the Book Review", which last is said by Miles to be a perfect Alexandrine. David Lehman of *Newsweek* made a strong statement to the National Book Critics Circle, saying:

A book review's pages are meant to perform critical discriminations for us—otherwise, what else are they but publicity sheets?—and the way to make critical discriminations, with poetry as with any other serious form of literature, is by getting the best possible reviewers to write the best possible reviews. To print a poem from a new book is fine and dandy. But to print a snippet of verse from a book in lieu of a review of that book seems to me to patronize poetry.

Interestingly, the response of the *LA Times* to this wounding attack is to claim that "the LATBR rate of poetry reviewing exceeds that of the *New York Times Book Review* not merely in relative terms but in absolute ones". According to Miles (who is nettled by the jibe "Miles to go" that has appeared in some quarters): "I mean that from March 29, 1987 through August 30, 1987, the LATBR published thirteen reviews of poetry books, two of which were books of poetry criticism. During the same period, by my count, the NYTBR published only eleven such reviews." That's certainly telling them—and with such statistics, who dares to say that poetry is a minority interest?

In the category of industry and initiative in telling us what we already suspected, a small prize to Nancy C. Andreasen. The October issue of the *American Journal of Psychiatry* contains her findings on the overgreen subject of genius and insanity. Ms Andreasen studied thirty writers from the visiting faculty of the University of Iowa Writers' Workshop, and compared them with a control group of non-literary professionals matched for IQ, age, sex and class (or "socioeconomic status", as she puts it). The study employed modern diagnostic procedures and focused also on the parents and siblings of both groups. The findings showed no link between creativity and schizophrenia, but found noticeably higher rates of mental illness among writers' families, and monitored two suicides among the writers themselves during the survey. The scribbles were four times as likely to be alcoholics. Con-

clusion: "These results do suggest that affective disorder may produce some cultural advantages for society as a whole, in spite of the individual pain and suffering that it also causes." Let's continue to hope so.

James Baldwin almost certainly had more influence on white Americans than he ever allowed himself to realize, and it is sad to think of his having died in the apparent belief that his preaching had been a waste of breath. One says "preaching" without meaning to imply that he sermonized: the fact is he learned his pitch and rhythm from the pulpit he rejected as a young man. He could no more forget that he was the son of preacher than he could forget that he was the grandson of a slave. But countless black men can claim the provenance. What distinguished Baldwin, in my opinion, was his ruthless, bitter, exact employment of the English tongue. He never spoke, as did and do so many Afro-Americans, in the private language of the ghetto or the rotund periods of the revival meeting. He did not jive. He held the attention of "the wider society" (and how he scorned such euphemisms) by his instinct for irony and nuance. This lent a distinctive bite even to his less well-judged polemics, and gave an arguably historic impetus to essays like *The Fire Next Time* and novels like *Giannis's Room*.

Just one year ago, he gave an unnoticed address to the National Press Club in Washington. Describing himself as "a black would-be citizen of this country", he ruminated on "a very complex nation that insists on being simple-minded". Simplicity, he hastened to say, can be a virtue like sincerity. But there is difficulty when "immaturity is taken to be a virtue too". This was all by way of stressing that the United States had not put its original sin of serfdom and subjection entirely behind itself. Baldwin resented the easy praise which America lavished on its slave-holding Founding Fathers, and was always prepared to be the spectre at any feast where this was celebrated. "It is one thing to do something. It is another to deny it." He was innately pessimistic about amelioration, always preferring to stress what had not been done and always curling his amazing lip at advances such as that "from the Middle Passage to the Metro Goldwyn Mayer back lot".

His homosexuality perhaps helped him see that black women were victims of more than racial discrimination, and he was accounted a friend by Toni Morrison, Alice Walker and other female novelists who strove at depicting what he termed "the duality of protection and emancipation". Defending Alice Walker's *The Colour Purple* from charges that it was unfair to black men, he affirmed that "I regard it as a family quarrel". Family or not, the atrocious colour line never inhibited Baldwin from criticizing black bigots and sectarians like Elijah Muhammed, any more than it saved him from being denounced by demagogues like Eldridge Cleaver.

Asked in Washington what he proposed that was (ah, yes) positive, he unhesitatingly put forward the idea of "White History Week". Invited to name his best book he said, "The first answer is the next one". (Actually, he most prized *Tell Me How Long the Train's Been Gone*.) Not long ago he told an interviewer that he hoped to die in mid-sentence. From the point of view of his admirers and of what he would never have presumed to call his people, that is almost exactly what he did.

With this column, I have been writing "American notes" for five years. I should prefer to stop while there is still a chance that people will ask why instead of why not. Outspeed to the NB page, on which I still hope to appear from time to time.

The winner of the Crime Writers' Association's Gold Dagger Award was Barbara Vine for *A Fatal Inversion*, published by Viking. The Silver Dagger went to Scott Turow for *Presumed Innocent*, published by Bloomsbury.

## Writing types

### H. R. Woudhuysen

"As little as thirty years ago", Philip Larkin wrote in 1967 about the Arts Council exhibition *Poetry in the Making*, "there was scant interest in the manuscripts of published works, especially of twentieth-century writers, except as a curiosity. . . . Today the situation is indeed altered." How much it has changed can be judged from the catalogue Sotheby's have prepared for their English Literature and History sale which will take place on December 15. Among the more conventional lots (including fine Wilde, Shaw, Graves and T. E. Lawrence material), there are over forty items mainly by living writers which are being sold for the benefit of the Writers in Prison Fund set up by PEN, the international association of writers: "it does cost money even to send a telegram of protest to a President or a Christmas Card to a forced labour camp", the catalogue dryly observes. These lots provide a very interesting commentary not just on the financial values which Sotheby's have attached to the works of the different authors, but also on their writing habits.

Handwriting varies: there is the pleasing italic of Rosamond Lehmann and Roy Fuller and the surprisingly neat, almost schoolboyishly careful hands of Tom Sharpe. Tom Stoppard and Gavin Ewart. The heaviest revisers appear to be Seamus Heaney, whose working papers for his poem "Remembering Malibu" clearly show the poem's painful development (estimate £800-£1,000), and Colin Thubron, who has covered, crossed out, and reworked almost every blank space of some pages of the manuscript of his *Mirror to Damascus* (estimate £200-£300). None of the authors featured in the sale appears to use a word-processor. The usual stages of composition still seem to be notebook followed by typed version; but who does the typing? Harold Pinter proudly pushes the title-page to the revised typescript of his play *Landscape* "Typed by the author & corrected by him" (estimate £800-£1,000), as does his wife Antonia Fraser, who announces on a card accompanying the typescript of her Jemima Shore mystery *Your Royal Haste*, "typed by the author, and corrected by the same" (estimate £300-£400). Margaret Drabble evidently moved beyond the notebook to typing directly on to detached slips in writing parts of *Rebels of Gold* ("a quantity") are included in the box of the novel's working papers, estimate £600-£800), and Humphrey Carpenter explains in a note accompanying the first draft of his book *The Inklings* (estimate £200-£250), that "I always write straight on to a typewriter".

Most writers use notebooks, pads or plain typing paper—Heaney helped himself to Harvard University writing paper; William Boyd uses pencil for drafting. Andrew Motion and Tom Stoppard correct and revise in pencil. Alan Ayckbourn revised the typescript of *A Small Family Business* in red ink (estimate £250-£300); most of the manuscript came in wrappers, folders, or envelopes, but Antonia Fraser put her novel in "a candy-striped folder". Anita Brookner's manuscript of a part of *A Friend from England*—"remarkable for the few corrections made to it"—comes in "a spiral-bound notebook" (estimate £400-£600), and John Julius Norwich went so far as to have the revised carbon copies of the typescript of his trilogy of history books bound in eleven volumes (estimate £100-£150).

It is not just readers who can get confused about fictional characters: Ayckbourn drew up a genealogical table for his play; Drabble prepared a cv for her main character and Arnold Wesker had to work out how fifteen actors could play fifty-nine parts in his unpublished play about Cynthia Payne, *Cladest*.

The highest prices in the sale of £1,000-£1,300 are expected for Stoppard and Spender items, but the typed, revised drafts of P. D. James's *A Taste for Death*, published last year, are put in the same bracket. It is interesting to note that Sotheby's scheme of things puts Catherine Cookson, who reveals that her novel *The Poisoned Daughter* was written in well under three months, in the same league (£800-£1,000) as Seamus Heaney and Harold Pinter.

## Letters

### Rabindranath Tagore

Sir, — Tapan Raychaudhuri's review of *Thy Hand, Great Anarch!* and *The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian* by Nirad C. Chaudhuri (November 27-December 3) makes reference to that great Bengali poet Rabindranath Tagore, but with the comment that his greatness "will never be appreciated, because it is virtually impossible to translate Tagore into any European language and no one will learn the language of a people without any economic or political power".

No translation, of course, can ever equal the original, yet there have been great translators who have, as it were, transposed some original into what is in its own right fine poetry — one has but to name Chapman's or Pope's Homer, Dryden's Virgil, Arthur Waley's Chinese poems, all of which have had a deep impact on the English language. Many excellent translations have done less than this but have brought something of the original — Leishman's Rilke, Eliot and others who have translated St John Perse in such a way as to make a shining contribution to the art of translation.

It is true that Tagore has not in the past been well served by translations, including his own, into English; this was deplored by W. B. Yeats, who was well aware of Tagore's greatness and who himself, with his friend T. Sturge Moore, worked on a number of poems so long as Tagore himself was willing for them to do so. Some English translations by Bengali translators, among them Tagore's pupil Aurobindo Ghose, are more than adequate; more recently Professor Sirir Kumar Ghose of Santiniketan has published a collection of translations by various (Indian) hands.

Your reviewer seems not to know, however, the recent translations made by William Radice, whose work has for English readers totally changed the former picture. Mr Radice's translations reveal Tagore as a poet of majestic greatness indeed. Radice has with great skill used English metres which, while they may not reproduce those of the Bengali language, are equivalents that reveal the great range and variety of Tagore's poetic skill, ranging from tenderness and grandeur to that kind of bare simplicity which Yeats also attained in his latest work. Radice has mastered the Bengali language, despite its "lack of importance in economic and political terms", and has recently translated stories by Tagore, whose work he continues to present to English readers in a form that brings us, more than your reviewer seems prepared to admit, the authentic greatness of this world poet.

KATHLEEN RATNE,  
Times, 47 Paultons Square, London SW3.

Sir, — In his review of Nirad Chaudhuri's *Thy Hand, Great Anarch!* and *The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian* Tapan Raychaudhuri quotes the author as describing Tagore as India's greatest poet of all times, and one of the world's twenty greatest writers. (One is tempted to ask who the other nineteen are.) As regards Tagore's status as a poet, it seems to me that Chaudhuri's key criterion for judging what he admires and appreciates in modern Indian culture and what he doesn't — namely the way in which and the extent to which it has imbibed Western (meaning largely, if not exclusively, British) culture and impact on their writings — gets the better of his critical judgment and objectivity. That of all the Indian poets in this and in the last century Tagore was (together with Aurobindo Ghose) the one most exposed to and influenced by Western culture, which exercised an immense and fruitful influence on his development as a writer and on his own writings, nobody can deny. Tagore was born in Bengal, and Bengal was the 'pearl of India', that, in cultural and literary terms, benefited most from its contact with the West. But this cannot be held against those Indian poets who lived and wrote in the pre-British era and who achieved poetic greatness without any Western influence. They include not only the ancient Indian poets (Ved, Valmiki and Kalidasa) but also poets who wrote in the vernacular (Kabir, whom Tagore himself translated into English; and some of whose poems Ezra Pound also translated in collaboration with Tagore's pupil, Kallol Ghose; Miral, Surdas, Tulsiadas and

Jayashankar Prasad, to confine oneself to Hindi alone).

As to Tagore's poetry being untranslatable into any European language: the fact is that few poets of this century have been so lucky with how their poems read in English as Tagore; few whose translated work can almost vie with the *Rubáiyat* in terms of the translation acquiring a creative felicity all its own, as does Tagore's own translation of *Ginnjahi* (in Pound's words, "very beautiful English prose with mastery of cadence"). One wonders what Pound would have made of the claim that Tagore was one of the twenty greatest writers of the world; or Aurobindo, who knew his Homer, Sophocles, Dante, Shakespeare and Goethe, as well as Vyass, Valmiki and Kalidasa in the original languages, of the claim that Tagore was the greatest Indian poet of all times.

As to Gandhi's doctrine being, as Chaudhuri observes, of Christian derivation and there being no Hindu antecedents of its application to human affairs, what about Ashoka's renunciation of the fruits of armed conquest and his conversion from violence to non-violence? Moreover, as Gandhi himself remarked, "truth and non-violence are as old as the hills".

G. SINGH,  
Department of Italian Language and Literature, The Queen's University of Belfast, Belfast.

### The British Council

Sir, — D. J. Enright, John M. Mitchell and Michael Barrett (Letters, November 13-19, 20-26, December 4-10) all ignore the central issue made in my article on British cultural diplomacy. This was that those who claim to be the agents of cultural relations between states must make a coherent case for claiming public money. The days are over when a comfortable intellectual establishment could elbow lesser mortals aside in the bid for cash, simply by brandishing the talisman of "culture". If the British Council's upholders are merely saying to taxpayers, give us more cash, each year because we say we represent your culture better than others, they will find it ever harder to get that cash.

The quantification of some public benefit from cultural diplomacy is not the issue — though, as I tried to point out, the British Council can quantify its benefit better than many other recipients of public money. The issue is making a case against competing claimants for money. The Council is dreadfully bad at this, and I cannot believe that Mr Mitchell's plea for a "conference" of the already converted will really help.

The Council is already making a vigorous case for a more constructive cultural diplomacy. My argument is that it would be more likely to convert that case into resources if its relationship with the Foreign Office were drastically changed. It should not be "privatized"; it should merely become independent.

SIMON JENKINS,  
17 Regent's Park Road, London NW1.

### The Status of Mathematical Astrology

Sir, — John Henry's review of two books on astrology (November 27-December 3) appears under the heading "Convincing guesswork". Since astrology is certainly not guessing, but, until the end of the seventeenth century, was based upon a very precise knowledge of and experience in geocentric astronomy, your point could not be more wrong. To put it another way, mathematical astrology is part of classical astronomy. Whether one finds the output of this science of astrology convincing — via accepted or novel interpretations of zodiacal "houses", for example, to forecast character from nativities — is entirely another matter. Personally, I remain resolutely sceptical about such things. But that is the art of the soothsayer and remains, to a great degree, that of the modern medical practitioner in diagnosis and especially prognosis: the latter point is of course made by Dr Henry in his following review.

D. T. WHITESIDE,  
Department of Pure Mathematics and Mathematical Statistics, University of Cambridge, 16 Mill Lane, Cambridge.

### The Oxford Illustrated Dickens

Sir, — I have the strong impression that Philip Collins has not actually looked at the new edition of the Oxford Illustrated Dickens which he dismisses so cavalierly ("Dickensian errata", November 20-26). I dipped into only a few of these splendidly produced volumes when I spotted them on display the other week but was delighted to find that the opening sentences of *Edwin Drood*, contrary to what Professor Collins says, have been corrected.

So far as the Oxford Illustrated Dickens being "nearer completeness than any other" is concerned, however, I would draw his attention to the elegant edition produced by Feron Books, which — unlike any other — contains two volumes devoted to Dickens's *Miscellaneous Papers*, a treasure-trove of gems virtually unknown to the average reader.

PETER ROWLAND,  
65 Essex Road, London E10.

### 'Women in Love'

Sir, — Your readers should not presume that the editors of *Women in Love* were unaware of the publication of the "discarded prologue" in *Texas Quarterly*, Spring 1963, to which George H. Ford drew your attention (Letters, November 27-December 3). The text printed in 1963 is the version collated with MS by the Cambridge editors; the differences between their text and Professor Ford's are listed in the Textual Apparatus, page 631.

JAMES T. BOULTON,  
Department of English Language and Literature, University of Birmingham, Birmingham.

### The Japanese Language

Sir, — Your reviewer of Merritt Ruhlen's *A Guide to the World's Languages*, Volume One (September 18-24), writes: "The Altaic family . . . has had, principally through the daring efforts of Roy Andrew Miller, Japanese joined to it." I am sure that my friend Professor Miller would be the first to ask for a correction. *Japanica non legitur*, and the efforts of Miller were published in English. Japanese scholars have published several studies on the Altaic relationship of the Japanese language: Fujioka (Katsuj) (1872-1935) wrote an article in 1908 that has been recently reprinted, with others on the same subject, in *The Genetic Relationship of Japanese: Fundamental studies 1908-1985*, Izumi Shoin, Editor (Tokyo, 1985). Professor Miller's main books on the subject, *The Japanese Language* (1967) and *Japanese and the other Altaic Languages* (1971), have been translated into Japanese.

WILLEM A. GROOTAERS,  
28-5, 2-chome, Setagaya-ku, 156 Tokyo.

### Captain FitzRoy

Sir, — I didn't find Fabienne Smith's letter (November 27-December 3) in any way childish. It's always pleasing to learn that there's someone out there reading your poems. I must admit to her that I have not read Darwin's letters, but I hope she will believe me when I say that I meant no calumny against Captain FitzRoy's skills as a surveyor.

I compared the coastline of South America with a sheep's jaw-bone. No doubt these things are thicker on the ground here in Cumbrus than they are in Edinburgh, but a man who could chart such complexities was clearly no hubberly tarpaulin. On this point, Darwin, Smith and I seem to be in total agreement.

NEIL CURRY,  
15B, Souergate, Ulverston, Cumbria.

### Views of the Male

Sir, — Monica Furlong, in her review of Leonardo Boff's book *The Maternal Face of God* (November 6-12), refers to "the Augustinian view that only in the male is human nature fully realized". Surely this is a slip for "the Aristotelian view". Aristotle being notorious for his statement, in scholastic Latin translation, that *femina est aus accensum*. I know of no such statement from the pen of St Augustine.

EDMUND HILL,  
St Augustine's Seminary, Roma, Lazio 00.

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# COMMENTARY

## Dickens in double vision

Adolf Wood

Little Dorrit  
Curzon West End

In his famous essay on *Little Dorrit* (1953), Lionel Trilling quietly announced that, together with *Bleak House* and *Our Mutual Friend*, it constituted Dickens's "great last period". Somewhat sorrowfully, he noted that of the three novels it was perhaps the least established with modern readers: *Bleak House* had come to be the best known, *Our Mutual Friend* was receiving ever-growing admiration, but *Little Dorrit* seemed "to have retired to the background and shadow of our consciousness of Dickens". Trilling's advocacy of the novel about the Marshalsea debtors' prison, "as speaking with a peculiar and passionate intimacy to our own time", and the even more categorical claims made for it by F. R. Leavis in *Dickens: The novels* (1971): "one of the very greatest of novels . . . its omission from any brief list of the great European novels would be critically indefensible", may well have helped to secure for it an unassailable position in the Dickens canon, but one suspects that for most people *Little Dorrit* still dwells in the "background and shadow". If that is so, there is unlikely to be a great outcry over any liberties

taken with the text in this film version (it seems there has only been one other, a silent film made in Germany in 1933).

Admirers of the novel will come away from the film with strongly ambivalent feelings. First, the good things to be said. There is, at the heart of this meticulous, six-hour-long adaptation – written and directed by Christine Edzard – an impressively poised seriousness, befitting the attempt to re-create what in some respects is Dickens's most profoundly searching examination of Victorian society, and of human nature in general. Many of the scenes are beautiful and moving, and remarkably faithful to both spirit and letter of the text. The worlds (interconnected in reality and symbol) of the Marshalsea prison, the Circumlocution Office, the domestic dungeon of Mrs Clennam, Bleeding Heart Yard, petit-bourgeois Twickenham, Grosvenor Square Society, the Rich Abroad, are brilliantly composed and harmonized: settings and costumes create an unmitigated authenticity of period, and sound is employed with rare subtlety and depth to convey metaphor (for example, the dull buzzing of the flies trapped in vinegar and sugar in gallinies in the Dorrits' chamber, while the Child of the Marshalsea is being born). And, perhaps the film's most conspicuous success – apart from the astonishingly good performances of Alec Guinness and Cyril Cusack (the brothers Dor-

rit), Derek Jacobi (Arthur Clennam), the late Joan Greenwood (Mrs Clennam), and just about everybody else in the huge cast – there is the quietly dogged portrayal by the little-known actress Sarah Pickering of Little Dorrit, who emerges as wholly convincing in her goodness and strength of character, as if to confirm Lionel Trilling's view of her: "Her uninitiated goodness does not appall us or make us misjudge her, as we expect it to."

*Little Dorrit*, the film, splits the story in two; each part is three hours' viewing. Part One, called "Nobody's Fault" (Dickens's original title for the novel), is told from Arthur Clennam's viewpoint; Part Two, "Little Dorrit's Story", from the heroine's. (The film takes its justification for this division from the novel – at the opening of Book One, Chapter 14, Dickens writes, "This history must sometimes see with Little Dorrit's eyes . . ."). Some scenes are filmed twice from slightly different angles and with different lighting. Arthur's section is drab, dark-lined, in keeping with his gloomy discomfitedness about life; Little Dorrit's, brighter, warmer-hued, bespeaking humility and selfless love. The device leads the film into some unprofitable repetition, and the gain in understanding is slight, because subliminal. There are numerous small restrictions: for instance, in the novel the rejected Arthur drops the flowers Minnie Meagles has given

him into a country stream; the film substitutes the Thames, helping to effect the transition to his meeting with Little Dorrit on the Iron Bridge in Southwark.

But there are also some alarming misjudgments. A worker in Daniel Doyce's factory is killed in an accident (this is invented, as is Doyce's death later in the film); incredibly, one hears another worker saying, "He could do the police in several voices", not quite straight out of *Our Mutual Friend*. You begin to ask the rather fruitless question, are there no limits to the permissible in transferring classic novels to the screen?

The most serious weakness arises from the wholesale removal of the Blandois-Rigaud element, a dimension of the book which is important for the overall imaginative structure and resonance of the novel as much as for the melodramatic thrills it provides. Out go Tatty Coram and Miss Wade; and out goes little John Baptist Cavalletto. An example of a minor but damaging consequence is that Affery's "delusion" that evil things are going on in the Clennam house remains a delusion: so that the knocks and bumpings in the night are merely "atmospheric". Prunes and prisms are out, too, by the way, with Mrs General's demise between page and screen; but then, film-making being what it doubtless has to be, it is perhaps "nobody's fault".

from gnosy youth to gung-ho killer well. When, towards the end of the play, he wantonly slits the throat of an old family servant while on a night prow for intruders, his unrepentant excitement is horribly believable. Neither Ann Mitchell as Sheila, however, nor Tony Doyle as Joe, has any confidence with the rhythms of South African English, and their performances are hampered by their efforts to stop their voices running off into Home Counties refined (Mitchell) or Bronx brogue (Doyle).

The moral weight of the play rests on Sheila. Despite a petulant façade, she turns out to have more sense and feeling than her weak husband and bloodthirsty son, not that either provides much competition. It is she who wants to leave the farm, and much of the latter part of the play is taken up with her attempts to leave for the railway station. Unfortunately, Ann Mitchell chooses to play Sheila in a grand manner, like some colonial Margaret Dumont, and

her series of flouncing exits in the second half rather undermines the sad final speech in which she resigns herself to an ugly future defending the farm.

The *Sunday Times* theatre critic felt that this was "the worst play of the year". It's not that bad. In spite of the deficiencies of this production, Speyer's characters are more than caricatures, and he succeeds in making us see things from their perspective. "Did you ever meet a white South African you liked?" asked a *Splitting Image* ditty of a year or so ago, giving expression to its own version of racial prejudice. Speyer's family, with their limitations of intellect and vision, are not exactly likeable. But we can still manage to identify with their concerns, as they wriggle in the historical trap they have set for themselves. The effort is worth making, for people like these will influence what happens in Southern Africa for many years to come.

## Touching temptation

Alan Jenkins

Manon des sources  
Curzon, Mayfair

No one who saw *Jean de Florette*, the first part of Claude Berri's adaptation of Marcel Pagnol's novels, *L'Eau des collines*, will need any encouraging to catch the second part, *Manon des sources*. Manon, daughter of the hunchback Jean, who died in the attempt to defeat nature and the cunning of local farmers (unsuspected by him to the end), is now a beautiful young woman and has taken to the hills with a herd of goats, waiting her time – though too young to understand its workings, she glimpsed enough as a child to convince her that some wrong had been committed. The wily César Soubeyran, Jean's tormentor, still hankers after an heir to the dynastic fortune; his nephew, the simple Ugolin (whose carnations flourish), is the only possible progenitor: Ugolin sees the nymph-like Manon bathing in a pool, and is badly smitten. Manon's attention has in turn been caught by the handsome young schoolmaster, whose geological investigations, rather than viceroy, make him up into the mountains, where he snarles more than a thrush or a hare.

Everything is in place for confrontation and crisis, the emergence of collective and individual guilt; revenge (Manon's, by water, of course) and retribution; in place, too, for the revelation of earlier tragic confusion and coincidences as the history of César's connection with the Jolles' Florette, and thus with Jean

and Manon, unravels from the tangle of ancient loves, jealousies and spites. As before, Provençal speech and village life are faultlessly caught; as before, Daniel Auteuil as Ugolin is almost preternaturally convincing. If the first film was Gérard Depardieu's, this one is unquestionably Yves Montand's, whose playing of "le Papet" Soubeyrans moves from the old gruffness and greed to heartbreak and unbearable remorse with complete authority. Transitions between communal force (the great arrival of the agricultural engineer, the "miracle" of the re-opened source) and private anguish (le Papet's isolation) or a mixture of farce and anguish (Ugolin's lovesickness) are handled smoothly, but the more rapid rhythms of this film, contrasting with the slow build-up to catastrophe of its predecessor, can approach the unintended humour of melodrama as sudden development is piled on development, and fate plays ever more terrible tricks. Emmanuelle Béart as Manon has, naked or clothed with a pleasing disarray, a watchable faun-like grace; but in a unique lapse of touch the director's treatment of her falls always to resist the lure of the Silvkrin commercial.

As a tribute to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, whose story "A Study in Scarlet" was published in *Berri's Christmas Annual* in 1887, the National Film Theatre is showing five Sherlock Holmes films during December. They include, on December 13, *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (1959), with Peter Cushing as Holmes; and *The Final Problem* (1985), with Eric Porter as Moriarty.

# COMMENTARY

## A sense of genius passing every genre

David Bromwich

Wordsworth and the Age of English Romanticism  
New York Public Library, until January 2

Up the steps at Forty-second Street and Fifth Avenue, past the "agreeable lions" and the hawkers of wares, you can find yourself suddenly amid several of the most striking and impressive landscapes in England. Only some of these are paintings; some are landscapes in writing; and some, like Coleridge's "Kubla Khan", seem less English than others. But there is a good deal to be said for a national claim even there. Edward Thomas thought he had found the "deep romantic chasm", if not the sunless sea, in Somersetshire.

*William Wordsworth and the Age of English Romanticism*, the exhibition now showing at the New York Public Library, was mounted collaboratively by Michael Jaye of Rutgers University in Newark, Robert Woof and Jonathan Wordsworth of the Dove Cottage Trust in Grasmere. The selection these scholars have made of paintings, engravings, manuscripts and first editions, with a catalogue full of anecdotes and explanations, may not quite add up to the definitive case for something called Romanticism. Those, that is to say, who remain in principle unconvinced of the reality of schools or movements, are likely to remain unconvinced by the evidence that confronts them here. Organized under loosely affiliated topics like "The Spirit of the Age", "Unity, Entire", "Memory, Imagination, and the Sublime" and "The Child is Father of the Man", the sequence of items suggests, if anything, a modest confederation of themes. There is no thesis about Wordsworth and the English Romanticism; let alone Notes Towards a Theory of Romanticism. And yet the extraordinary richness of the materials that have been assembled goes a long way to justify one's sense of the greatness of a period.

Of the painters, Turner, Constable, Cotman and Thomas Girtin dominate the exhibition; above all, Turner. His works have been cunningly distributed about the room, to give weight to the themes, and the narrative that accompanies them; even so, they make a fair-sized imaginary museum of his best non-classical landscapes. Almost nothing here is in the vein of Claude; nothing of Venice, or Canaletto, or Flomer. But Turner, as we are reminded, was very much himself in the Lake district: in "Ullswater", for example, where the lake spreads a thin sheen like a mirage, and the human figures are so frail and diaphanous as to seem almost Oriental. In a very different landscape, "The Passage of the St Gothard", he discovers (as Wordsworth never did) a terror that is at home in the Alps anywhere along the way. The mules with their bags are close to the left; a little farther to the centre, a cross marks the death of an earlier traveller; but, from top to bottom, the canvas is riven by a wide abyss, from which proceed billowing clouds of mist. An echo of the whole scene is marked by the far-off line of a waterfall that seems to pass from nowhere to nowhere.

To sketch it, Turner must have backed against a rock just over the narrow path, and stayed there alone for a long time. He is said to recall Wordsworth most closely, however, in his "atmospheric" paintings, and in his use of the fade-out. But the effects are altogether disparate; and not only because poetry is not like painting. Wordsworth's "fallings from us, vanishing" occur against a background of "looking steadily at my subject" – where weakness is very nearly a matter of demarcating the outlines of the thing. By contrast, Turner cares for objects as a medium for light. Except by a sort of happy accident (as in the faintest exclamation of "Ullswater"), he can rise no interest at all in his people; whereas Wordsworth met on a road had, even him, potentially as large a claim as a pond had measured from side to side.

Of the faces of things, Constable makes a stronger instance of Wordsworth's influence. Whatever the documents may prove, this too looks elusive to the eye. His "atmosphere" brings out the difference. With

its streaky purple sky and ghostly rainbows, and its bare, yellow, calligraphically exact monoliths standing and fallen, it has nothing to do with the Wordsworth of "Salisbury Plain" who is invoked to explain it: "Thou Hoary pile, thou child of darkness deep/And unknown days." Nor do Constable's studies of Waterloo Bridge link up meaningfully (as, in an ideal curator's universe, they would) with Wordsworth's sonnet on Westminster Bridge, which again is quoted nearby in the exhibition. Constable is looking at the river, Wordsworth at the city and from rather higher up. Lately returned from France, and with thoughts of war against Napoleon, he wonders what it would be like to command the power that lies asleep below him. Constable, though he paints a day of average wind, has calmer thoughts.

Still, all these smaller themes, which are really just subjects (bridges, Alps), have the virtue of allowing the viewer to form his own juxtapositions. And for variety, dignity, and what Keats called "depth of taste", the paintings and sketches, as well as the literary specimens that Jaye, Woof, and Jonathan Wordsworth have brought together, would be hard to match in any of the major museums or special collections from which they were chosen. The best of them include Crome's "Moonlight on the Yare", Olin's "On the River Wharfe, Yorkshire", and Turner's "Llanthony Abbey". But then, some way across the room, one remembers also Samuel Palmer's "Cornfield by Moonlight with the Evening Star", and Girtin's "White House at Chelsea", and Constable's "The Lock". On every side are examples of elegant workmanship in a genre, like Thomas Hearne's "View from Skiddaw over Derwentwater"; and, equally, of genius passing every visible genre, as in Turner's "Figures on a Wet Shore". Maybe, after all, the helpful catalogue-placards, as much as the partitions themselves, conceal the "diversity entire" of an exhibition which has space even for Colman's "Bedlam Furtace", where the turquoise of the Severn is uneasily balanced by a non-made sublimity, a strip of rust orange floating upward from the industrial works.

From a more narrowly literary perspective,

Wordsworth does stand at the centre of his age, and all of the documents show why. He is the name of one whole side of a contest which Blake, in a displayed annotation, can be seen fighting with himself: "I see in Wordsworth the Natural Man rising up against the Spiritual Man Continually & Then he is No Poet but a Heathen Philosopher at Enmity against all true Poetry or Inspiration." More directly, Wordsworth is the motive for the verse-letter by Coleridge that became "Dejection: on Ode" – the text of which, as we now can see, he wrote beneath a dotted line after a transcription of "Resolution and Independence" (in an early version). The storm and calm of Wordsworth's story seems to be answered here by a renewal of the storm. Even in the Shelley holographs, Wordsworth is still a discernible presence, not so much in the weather as in the tonality and shadings. A draft of the last stanza of the "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty" hopes that this unseen power may "To my not onward life supply its hues, to us one that worships thee." The anti-Wordsworthian reaction that induced Shelley to change "us" to "one" (and, perhaps, "not unworthy" to "unworthy"), has selected by the final draft of the poem, in which the self-conscious "hues" gives way to a simple Wordsworthian "ealm."

Holograph manuscripts of the "Ode to the West Wind", "To Autumn", many of the age's best-known shorter poems and passages, have been freely broadcast throughout the exhibition; commonly, these include legible and distinctive revisions, and they are always worth a long pause: a pleasure, incidentally, till now confined to the academic researcher, so that, in its being shared, one feels a non-exclusionist spirit proper to the occasion. The new exposure can produce some odd results; and at the New York Public Library, on at least one Saturday afternoon, a clutch of enthusiasts could be heard screaming in unison, "They flash upon that inward eye/Which is the bliss of solitude!" But this survival of the Frontier Spirit would probably have delighted Wordsworth. And in the selections from the hero of the show himself, the organizers are to be praised both for their major and minor choices. The

## Textures of fur and leaf

Kate Flint

Beatrix Potter 1866-1943  
Tate Gallery, until January 31

"I can't invent, I only copy", Beatrix Potter once said. The exhibition of her work and life at the Tate Gallery shows, however, how the appeal of her best-known work lies in her ability to combine the meticulous accuracy of a naturalist's copying skills with imaginative insight into the angle of vision of small animals, clustered among the tea-cups on the dresser in *The Tailor of Gloucester*, or furiously trundling a rolling-pin across a stair landing in *The Tale of Samuel Whiskers*.

This comprehensive, fascinating show traces the genesis of Potter's children's books. Domestic details – Peter Rabbit's first appearance in an illustrated letter; a study of Potter's own pet of that name stretched asleep in front of the fire in Bolton Gardens, her childhood home – combine with publishing history. Potter insisted that her books should be small enough for children to hold comfortably, sold at a price "that little rabbits could afford", and this exhibition emphasizes how closely her manuscript designs were followed in producing the final text. On the other hand, we learn of Harold Warner's prudish caution – he objected to the words "all the rest of Tom's clothes came to the words" – and his tabby-and-white fur in the first place – and Frederick Warner's insistence that she redraw the picture of a Mrs McGregor serving up Peter's father in a pie, in case the woman's face frightened the young children. On occasion, Potter's work slides into the whimsical, especially when frilly caps and bonnets over-feminize her animals. More often, however, her imagination demonstrates a sadistic streak.

Sometimes, this is for a moral purpose, as when the disobedient Tom lies rigid with apprehension inside a roly-poly, or Squirrel Nutskin returns from his disrespectful treatment of Old Brown, with his russet skin intact but minus his tail. Elsewhere, it is simply an acknowledgement of nature's cruelty, as in a pencil drawing of "The Weasel's Poultry Shop", where dead birds and mice are impaled on nails by the shop's prosperous proprietor.

Delightful though it is to observe the original drawings for familiar ducks, hedgehogs and rabbits, what is most striking in this exhibition is Potter's talent as a recorder of natural phenomena. Born into an artistic family – her father was an amateur photographer, her brother a competent sketcher and etcher, John Everett Millais a close family friend – Potter was drawing caterpillars and lizards from a young age, and copying, as her early sketch books show, from Walter Crane and Japanese prints. Her father owned drawings by Randolph Caldecott, another conspicuous influence upon her. Potter's first commercial work was designing Christmas cards; mice in nests, rabbits hanging up stockings. The dry brush technique which she used brought out tiny gradations in fur and in leaf textures, although it did not adapt well to mass reproduction: later, she adopted more fluent colour washes. Her most impressive work, however, is found when she abandons drawing mice and rabbits under Renair-style umbrellas, and turns to toadstools. "Now of all hopeless things to draw, I should think the very worst is a fine fat fungus"; but she disproved her own maxim with over 300 drawings of red fly Agaric and Stinkhorn, Larch Canker Fungus and The Old Man of the Woods. Potter recorded the environments in which they were found, and kept an exact record of the timing and appearance of spore germination. Her understanding of the compound nature of lichens was invaluable.

display, for example, of Wordsworth's first surviving holograph, the imitation of Anacreon that begins "Reynolds come thy pencil prove/Reynolds come and paint my love," is enlivened to please scoffers and devotees alike.

On the whole, the historical and political specimens are the weakest side of this exhibition. It could not possibly live up to the second title it sometimes appears to be bidding for, "Wordsworth and the Age of Revolution". As for the French Revolution, it is limited here to a slightly hackneyed choice of subjects, with considerable emphasis given to two events: Wordsworth imagined rather than witnessed: the September massacres and the taking of the Bastille. Hubert Robert's "Coulouir à Saint Lazare" does give an actual resonance to Wordsworth's nightmare of "Each in his separate cell, or penned in crowds . . . / And levity in dungeons, where the dust/Was laced with tears". But, in general, the political connections are not made. From this age of English Romanticism, one can learn much about Blake's revolt against Newton, but nothing about his rage against the academy and his royal outworks. Such limitations, however, are in some measure dictated by necessity, and they will doubtless be answered by other exhibitions, which will scarcely try to do what this one does surprisingly well.

There is a minimum of relics – an omission requiring admirable self-restraint, from Wordsworthians; though one can see his spectacles, or one likes, and their leather case, and the only piece of furniture that muttered: an ink-stund, dnting, to judge by its ceremonial heft, from his later years at Rydell Mount. The catalogue, with a text by Jonathan Wordsworth, is unusually complete and attractive, with no less than 120 colour plates, few of them either faded or drenched by a single colour. From New York the show will move, during February, to the Indiana University Art Museum in Bloomington, and during April and May, to the Chicago Historical Society. It is worth travelling a long way to see: nothing better of the kind is likely to appear for an age or so.

She met with resistance from contemporary experts, none the less, both as an amateur and as a woman: not until fifty-nine of her illustrations were used in Dr Findlay's *Wayside and Woodland Fungi* (1967) was her talent fully acknowledged. Nor did Potter's recording of minutiae stop at rotten tree-trunks and shrubby rubbish heaps. In the late nineteenth century, she recorded fossils and fragments of Samian pottery.

In later life, Potter's main interest lay in sheep – she was a noted breeder and judge of Herdwicks – and in the preservation of the Lake District landscape. She invested profits from her books in farmland and old cottages, bequeathing over 4,000 acres of land and fourteen farms to the National Trust on her death: it is fitting that the proceeds of the exhibition will go to the Trust's Lake District Appeal. Doubtless it will be much visited over the Christmas period, but while one is grateful to Ford of Britain for refurbishing the Tate's old lecture rooms to provide new exhibition space, they have not been put to best use. Beatrix Potter worked on a small scale, but the exhibition places her within a large context, and it is regrettable that her watercolours and designs are too cramped to allow easy viewing of their admirable detail by either adults or children.

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## Virtuoso variations

### Stephen Wall

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Hardly any of the original likenesses of Dickens – whether portraits or photographs – give much idea of that vivacity of eye which struck his contemporaries so forcibly. Any page of his works, however, will almost certainly provide examples of the extraordinary energy with which he saw things. It is not only a question of acute observation; of course, but also of masterful appropriation; Dickens feels he has to re-create as well as record. In *Dickens the Designer* Juliet McMaster aims to show how and why Dickens makes appearances tell, so that vision becomes subsumed by "vision".

The first part of the book is given over to examples of Dickens's presentation of such details as hands, faces, eyes, bodies, gestures, and his use of space and light. What Professor McMaster stresses is Dickens's use of physical appearance to define moral essence – Pickwick's fitness indicates benevolence, Uriah Heep's serpentine writhings a sinister sexuality, and so on. But it hardly seems necessary to underline the mere fact of this aspect of Dickens: he was always an artist of the obvious as well as of the astonishing. What is inimitable is surely the combination of a primary and even primitive physical delineation of a character's moral quality with the extreme and increasing verbal virtuosity of the novelist's elaboration of appearance. McMaster tends to play down the extent to which descriptions in Dickens become free-falling stunts of metaphor and fantasy, and as such develop a kind of self-delighting self-sufficiency. Moreover, the oceanic abundance of physical detail in Dickens makes any brief trawl such as is offered here look inadequately representative.

In the second part of *Dickens the Designer*

McMaster takes six of the novels and attempts to show how in each of them certain visual motifs are utilized to give us a sense both of the book's overall composition and of its essential meaning. She rightly emphasises Dickens's wish to "make you see" (in Conrad's famous phrase) but leaves rather to one side the complicated question of how much of our perception of Dickens we owe to his illustrators, especially Phiz. McMaster proposes some ambitious analogies between Dickens's practice and that of painters like Turner, Manet and the Impressionists, and suggests that the use of fog in *Bleak House* resembles Turner's explanation of atmospherics. However, to say that "Dickens's High Court of Chancery is a kind of verbal impressionist painting" is to over-stress the admittedly hyper-active authorial eye at the expense of Dickens's other senses, particularly the ear. It also ignores the presence, in Chapter One of *Bleak House* as elsewhere, of those visual conceits which treat appearance as the basis for fantasitification.

Throughout *Dickens the Designer* there is a strong undertow pulling in the direction of conventional thematic analysis. Thus *Dombey and Son* is seen as a set of virtuoso variations on coldness and hardness as opposed to warmth and softness, so as to show the death or apparent death of feeling both in Dombey himself and in society. Captain Cuttle is like Donkey in that he is hard without, but unlike him in being warm within, and is therefore regularly seen in heated reactions and circumstances. Major Bagstock often seems near boiling-point, but his warmth is combined with a crustacean hardness that allies him with Dombey's frigidity. However, the opposition of hot and cold is so fundamental to almost any representation of life that much of the novel's detail can be pressed into service. The fact that Toodles is a stoker aligns him of course with the warm and human, and soft Polly Toodles's function as Paul's wet-nurse naturally means that she "bears a large thematic burden" in addition to her other responsibilities. McMaster's attempt to persuade us of Dickens's "design" either duplicates what is obvious or founders under the weight of the novel's multifariousness.

One of the difficulties of the method is shown by the chapter on *Our Mutual Friend*, which Juliet McMaster takes to be a novel about a disintegrating society. The book, therefore, constantly stresses the decomposing, the fragmentary and the misrelated. The

environment of Bradley Headstone's school is typical of the novel's landscapes in being, as Dickens says, "set up anyhow" – but crazy and disintegrating buildings were always a feature of the Dickens world. Bits of London are already falling to pieces in *Oliver Twist*; railway development reduces Staggs's Gardens to incineration in *Dombey*; Tom All Alone's in *Bleak House* is in a state of collapse. It is true that Dickens found urban insanity less exhilarating in his later novels, but the attempt to make it part of *Our Mutual Friend*'s unique "design" is, to say the least, severely tested by its abundant presence elsewhere.

For all its incidental enlightenments, *Dickens the Designer* damages its own thesis by trying to make everything fit. Gwen Watkins's *Dickens in Search of Himself* also tries to make sense of Dickens's proliferating creativity through the control of a leading idea. Mrs Watkins writes more as a lifelong lover of Dickens than as a professional student of him (not that the two categories are mutually exclusive), and her book is a personal interpretation with modest apparatus. She does not see Dickens's experiences in the Hacking factory as precipitating the central trauma, arguing that this episode and Dickens's mother's part in it simply confirmed an antecedent sense of maternal deprivation dating from infancy. Mrs Watkins refers briefly to the work of psychiatrists like Bettelheim and Laing but does not claim any expertise herself. This is attractively candid – and indeed one can't miss the human sympathy apparent throughout – but perhaps more disarming than the author realizes. The case for and against Mrs Dickens as a mother is not reviewed with the care or fullness found in Michael Slater's *Dickens and Women* (1983), and the whole argument rests too easily on the uncritical adoption of controversial psychological models. There is no question that Dickens was profoundly excited artistically by such motifs as the unloved child's sense of guilt, the search for the absent mother and the split within the self, but it would need a more sustained and professional diagnosis to convince one that all such fictive manifestations have a common infantile source.

In his journalism Dickens constantly defended the right of the people to be rationally amused. "We are lamentably deficient in Cheap Pleasures," stated *Household Words* in 1851. He also defended the right of the audience to something better than the Wopple school of Shakespearian interpretation. Dickens's own public readings in his later years are seen by Paul Schlicke as a final sign of his commitment to the provision as well as the recommendation of popular entertainment. The idea that the readings were a nobly disinterested response to a cultural crisis smacks of special pleading, but it stimulatingly offsets the common assumption that they represent a regrettable capitulation to the demonic energies seething within.

Although he is fully aware of more modern approaches, Paul Schlicke's Dickensianism is of a more traditional kind. Dickens was patently indulgent towards popular entertainment, and Schlicke usefully checks out his fictional representation of fairs, theatres, showmen and circuses against historical reality. The

amusements of the people, a childhood fascination of Dickens's, were of fundamental importance to him because of their social value in promoting kindly and delighted feelings, and because of the stimulus and solace they offered to the imagination. Sleary's much-quoted remark in *Hard Times* that "people might be amused" is put in a more informed and enlightening context in *Dickens and Popular Entertainment* than it usually is.

Popular entertainments in Dickens's time were in a state of transition, moving from pre-industrial survivals towards greater commercialization and mobility. The demise of Bartholomew Fair in 1840 is exactly contemporary with *The Old Curiosity Shop*, and is symptomatic of the critical condition of traditional amusements – a situation also revealed by Dickens's treatment of itinerant showmen in the novel. A comparable alertness is shown in *Nicholas Nickleby*, where the Crummles company represent "the mainstream of theatrical practice" in the provincial touring theatres of the day; there were plenty of Infant Phenomena about. Schlicke finds that the Crummles are presented with more accuracy than Sleary and his equestrian troupe because the latter are more subdued to the thematic programme of *Hard Times*. Although absurd, the Crummles' way of life has a depth not so evident in the handling of Sleary and his harlequins, who are idealized and even otherworldly. This is partly put down to the lack of hard financial information about their business, but such vagueness is surely typically Dickensian. Schlicke agrees with the modern orthodoxy that Sleary and Co are custodians of human value, but his practical approach prevents him from being too dewy-eyed about them.

In his journalism Dickens constantly defended the right of the people to be rationally amused. "We are lamentably deficient in Cheap Pleasures," stated *Household Words* in 1851. He also defended the right of the audience to something better than the Wopple school of Shakespearian interpretation. Dickens's own public readings in his later years are seen by Paul Schlicke as a final sign of his commitment to the provision as well as the recommendation of popular entertainment. The idea that the readings were a nobly disinterested response to a cultural crisis smacks of special pleading, but it stimulatingly offsets the common assumption that they represent a regrettable capitulation to the demonic energies seething within.

criminals were hanged together twenty-seven spectators died in the crush. Nearly all theses of this kind show a rhetorical passion for quoting authorities. This would in principle have warmed the heart of Quintilian, but he would have grieved at the misdeeds of the quotations actually used here, too often paraphrases of what the writer has just said and for which she needs no outside support. Practical rhetoricians like Moses have always known that if you are going to impress the tribe by means of citing an authority you had better come back down the mountain with something really weighty.

It is a pleasure to turn to *Sacred Tears*. Fred Kaplan puts literature first. He proffers his study of sentimentality in Victorian writing under the modest guise of a speculative essay which future scholars, attempting a definitive work on the subject, may find a helpful point of departure. These hypothetical scholars may be more exhaustively in their methods than Professor Kaplan but they will have their work cut out. If they try to be more stimulating, *Sacred Tears* is selective to the point of omitting any sustained mention of at least three major novelists in the period and is therefore exhilaratingly short. Its undogmatic tone positively invites us to agree or be aggravated as we think fit.

The first chapter traces the origins and development of Victorian sentimentality from the viewpoint of both semantics and moral philosophy. We are left with the agreeable impression that it was a fide and heroic crusade, the strange device on whose banner represented the innate goodness of human nature and whose battle-hymn was a call to the natural expression of natural feelings, especially to the

form of tears. The enemy was the growing horde of cynics and realists who did not share the sentimentalists' vision of the ideal. The particular foe whom Kaplan singles out is Carlyle on the grounds that, though his views were self-contradictory and limited, he seemed to conclude that sentimentality was actually a corrupting influence.

As chief advocates and exemplars of nineteenth-century sentimentality Kaplan selects Dickens and Thackeray. Dickens is of course an obvious choice, not only because he was worshipped for his sentimentality in his own day but because he is often execrated for it in ours. Most readers would find Thackeray a more doubtful case. To an extent Kaplan does so as well, though he argues convincingly enough that Thackeray's "irony is a defence against the widespread attack on moral sentiments rather than a weapon in its service". He bases so many of his points on *Vanity Fair* that one's doubts may spring from the character of Amelia Sedley. Kaplan admits that she has her faults but feels that they "are of the sort that do not detract from but actually strengthen her role as an idealization of the moral sentiments". Surely her weak judgment, especially of people – which is the politest way in which one can describe her stupidity – must detract from this role; and Thackeray himself does seem to see it like that. One thinks of Dickens's Esther Summerson; she is a walking repository of moral sentiments but it is part of her benevolence that she can see through Harold Skimpole and old Mr Turveydrop; long before the more worldly characters do. Sound judgment must surely have been at the heart of true Victorian sentimentality.

## In search of the source

### G. W. Ireland

**LOYD AUSTIN**  
*Poetic Principles and Practice: Occasional papers on Baudelaire, Mallarmé and Valéry*  
311pp. Cambridge University Press. £37.50.  
0521 327377  
**NATHANIEL WING**  
*The Limits of Narrative: Essays on Baudelaire, Flaubert, Rimbaud and Mallarmé*  
155pp. Cambridge University Press. £22.50.  
0521 327104  
**J.A. HIDDLESTON**  
*Baudelaire and "Le Spleen de Paris"*  
124pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £20 (paperback, £6.95).  
0191 518394  
**PETER DAYAN**  
*Mallarmé's "Divine Transposition": Sources of literary value*  
246pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £27.50.  
0191 518416

Flaubert, Baudelaire and Mallarmé were perhaps the first writers of consequence (though they all would have invoked the name of Poe) to make the possibilities and limitations of his art a major, or even the major, preoccupation of an author. Of course, literary criticism had to meet the writers on this chosen (or perhaps ineluctable) ground. If the writer asked himself "What am I doing when I am writing a text?" the critic could not but respond, "What am I doing when I am reading a text? What is a *lecture*?" French critics from Barthes to Derrida (and no doubt beyond) have risen eagerly to meet this challenge and their anglophone counterparts have not lagged far behind.

Australian scholars – from A. R. Chisholm onwards – have made a contribution to this discussion out of all proportion to their number and among them Lloyd Austin claims an honoured place. In a long and distinguished teaching career he has inspired generations of students and his scholarly work (notably as one of the editors of Mallarmé's correspondence) has earned the gratitude of students of French everywhere. *Poetic Principles and Practice* is a compilation of occasional papers: eighteen articles, twenty-four reviews and two "tributes to past masters". The volume is handsomely produced and attractively illustrated. But it is impossible that all the items in a compilation of

this kind – ranging from substantial learned articles through public lectures and conference papers to book reviews and even necrological notices – can be of equal interest. Professor Austin is a master of all of these genres; but even he is subject to their limitations.

It is a matter for very real regret that he did not attempt more of a synthesis. Still, we have every reason to be grateful for what he has given us. If the wood remains tantalizingly elusive, the trees – and sometimes the shrubs – are delineated with impressive clarity.

Although Nathaniel Wing, like Austin, is widely read and though he too makes ample yet discriminating use of his reading, he is more adventurous in his explorations, more speculative in his ideas. In both senses of the term he is harder to follow. He has a taste for paradox and a weakness for puns which tend to stimulate rather than convince. None of this, however, detracts seriously from the value of his principal arguments and all of it combines to give his writing a quality of excitement that is not, in the end, unwelcome.

*The Limits of Narrative* is also a compilation of occasional papers, this time on Baudelaire, Flaubert, Rimbaud and Mallarmé. But though the individual items in this case are less heterogeneous, we still have to wait until Chapter Four for the most satisfactory account of the preoccupation that underlies the book:

I propose to examine the narrator's developing relations to the text by studying some of the various ways in which the self is inscribed as an effect of writing in which each utterance of the first person pronoun produces a division of the self at the very instant it is posited. . . . To this sense, the practice of writing is not the expression of self, contained by the rhetoric of autobiography, but the exploration of effects of subjectivity in language; the subject of writing, then, becomes the autobiography of rhetoric.

Perhaps the best chapter in the book is the one devoted to "Emma's stories". Wing relies heavily here on (amply acknowledged) secondary sources; but he has mastered them and drawn his own conclusions. The most interesting chapter, however, is the last, where he takes as his starting-point Marx's analysis of the Second Empire as farce, a comedy of representation that represented nothing real:

Marx does not examine the problematic underlying his rhetorical models, for it is part of the historical impasse of the times, whose resolution awaits the moment of a different order of class interests. Strategically Marx deflects the issues with explosive laughter. Unsimilable, heterogeneous elements

pose, to be informed by a peculiar significance, were those robes that Fortuny has created following ancient Venetian designs. . . .

The painter Elstir, at Balbec, prefers modern fashions to those imitated from the times of Veronese and Carpaccio. Such glancing references to Fortuny's creations keep recurring like "la petite phrase de Vinteuil" or Bergotte's "accent non noté".

Fortuny, who died in 1949, lived in the Palazzo Orfei in Venice that is now the Museo

are marked in these essays, then, by the moment of farce and by the derisive laughter it occasions. Marx's analysis is thus caught in an outmoded model of narrative, which contemporary "events" have rendered inoperative, but which he none the less repeats in his own text. Farce figures meanings which are unimimable, excessive and scandalous, not to be contained by the narratives of the past, but which cannot yet be transformed into radically new narrative.

With due acknowledgements to Dominick La Capra, Professor Wing then shows how the trials of Baudelaire and Flaubert for obscenity epitomize the limitations of the views of literature which faithfully reflected the values of the bourgeoisie of the day.

J. A. Hiddleston is less adventurous than Wing and easier to understand. His hook, too, is something of a compilation; but it amounts to a series of commentaries on Baudelaire's prose poems. Hiddleston in fact refers to Wing and speaks in his turn of "the split in the poetic persona" but he does so in a very different way: "This split in the poetic persona, or, rather, this fragmentation of personhood. . . (My italics)". He sees the "split" as something anterior to and independent of the elaboration of the text. In itself such a view need not be implausible but it is necessarily very incomplete and nowadays thematically of this kind may well appear somewhat naïve.

"The moral lesson which Baudelaire draws in the prose poems," says Hiddleston, "is predominantly pessimistic", and, by and large, he makes good his claim. But after the thrills and spills of Wing his hook seems lacking in excitement. It reads, in fact, like a thoughtful course of lectures to an undergraduate seminar on Baudelaire's prose poems written up for publication.

Peter Dayan is considerably more challenging. His book has the initial advantage over the others discussed here in being not a collection but a monograph. He knows where to start from, where he intends to go and how he intends to get there. He does not hesitate to introduce freely into his text summaries and signposts designed to help us to grasp the underlying unity of his argument as it unfolds.

Within this unity, however, there are elements of division: "is the subject of this book literary value or is it Mallarmé?" It is true, says Dayan, that we can no longer accept the notion of an autonomous and privileged "author" as the sole source of the riches of a literary text and the sole guarantor, so to speak, of the

authenticity of its utterance. He prefers to see "[the] independence and precedence of the constituted work over the individual reader or writer – the text appearing (despite the historical fact of its composition) as original source". But there are difficulties in the way – and Dayan is not slow to recognize them. When one seeks to dispense with the author as *point de repère*, "one runs the risk of losing one's ability to take into account appropriately the special types of reading, of invitation to sense-creation, which inevitably retain priority in each specific type of text".

Dayan himself quite consciously in the first part of his book adopts a stance which "relies unashamedly on that figure of the speaking author which not only Barthes and Derrida, but also Mallarmé himself, sought to oust from his traditional position at the centre of the poetic process". Not only does he make no apology for doing so. He expresses himself, on this point, in terms so strong that one wonders if he realizes just what he is saying or how important it is that it should be said: "I hope that in the second part of my book, that 'indequacy' will be remedied – or rather, shown to have been necessary". As part, therefore, of a comprehensive critical approach it may be necessary to entertain in practice critical concepts that cannot be satisfactorily grounded in theory.

In the case of Mallarmé, says Dayan, "as the author-figure ceases to be part of his thinking its place is taken by a more anonymous and impersonal 'self'; and this raises the central question:

How, then, can one reconcile the refusal of Mallarmé's language to express, to signify, to be reduced to an imitation of anything outside itself, and the assertion that the value of a text comes from outside it, from the 'soil'? Why, if the Mallarméan ideal exists independently of the text, does Mallarmé's work not appear an attempt to express it?"

One other theme of the study deserves special mention: Mallarmé's preoccupation with art as public manifestation. In a section of the book entitled "La foule", Dayan illuminates not only Mallarmé's desperation over the failure of *la foule* – the masses – to play the part ideally assigned to them in the creation of literary value but also the anguish of all those artists sufficiently sensitive to the problems arising out of the profound interdependence of art and society to share that desperation.

back to life the fantastic elegance of the costumes in Carpaccio's "Legend of Saint Ursula" or in the *Arabian Nights* so beloved by Proust.

Fortuny was also a photographer of innovative talent. He had a photographic studio in his palace, and today an immense exhibition hall on the top floor displays his superb collection of photographs, including some by Atget of long-vanished Paris and those provincial towns Proust loved to visit. Proust does not mention Atget, but must have known some of these early photographic masterpieces. Proust has, though, helped to immortalize Fortuny – his unique style, his re-invention of lost techniques for the manufacture of Renaissance fabrics; and it is in this sense of the haunting presence of Fortuny in *À la Recherche de temps perdus* that permeates every page of Macé's work. Its dozen pages of *scholarship* enhance its value as an important survey of a lesser-known but very characteristic aspect of Proust's work.

*Stendhal et l'Angleterre: Proceedings of the London Colloquium, French Institute, 13-16 September 1983*, edited by K. G. McWaters and C. W. Thompson (397pp. Liverpool University Press. £22.50. 0 85323 045 5) contains twenty-five essays (mostly in French) on Stendhal's two-way contact with Britain and British writers.

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## The call to natural expression

### Patricia Beer

**BETH KALIKOFF**  
*Murder and Moral Decay in Victorian Popular Literature*  
193pp. Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press. £40.  
08357 17623  
**BARBARA WEISS**  
*The Hell of the English: Bankruptcy and the Victorian novel*  
208pp. Associated University Presses. £21.  
08387 5099D  
**A. SUSAN WILLIAMS**  
*The Rich Man and the Disposed Poor in Early Victorian Literature*  
152pp. Macmillan. £27.50.  
0333 384733  
**FRED KAPLAN**  
*Sacred Tears: Sentimentality in Victorian Literature*  
156pp. Guildford: Princeton University Press. £13.  
0691 067007

All four of these books are destined for the well-filled shelf labelled *Victorian Literature* and. . . . One of them, Fred Kaplan's *Sacred Tears*, shows that the label on the shelf does not necessarily indicate a dying culture. This is fortunate as the other three might suggest that it did. The books by Beth Kalikoff, Barbara Weiss and A. Susan Williams can be discussed together; indeed it would be difficult not to. They all treat literature as a means to an end, and the end seems to be not to provide a critical

vision which could be generally illuminating but to get a piece of graduate work between hard covers. They trundle along the grooves of academe like streetcars named Tenure. They are very old-fashioned.

Their ostensible *raison d'être* is to throw light on aspects of Victorian literature by means of the themes indicated in the titles: they discuss bankruptcy as metaphor, disease as metaphor and so on. In fact they throw little light. This is not because they distort literature in order to make their point, as nearly all feminist writers do, but because they show little feeling for and understanding of the books they deal with. Beth Kalikoff makes two basic mistakes in her outline of the plot of *Bleak House*. Barbara Weiss, in her account of the blissful conclusion of *Dombey and Son*, though she makes a good point about the episode of Bunsby's marriage, spares no more than a brief thought for Edith Dombey's barren future, whereas Dickens spared her a whole chapter. Stragglers of all, A. Susan Williams fails to see that Rosa Dorr is being savagely ironical when, in reply to Steerforth's argument that the poor are less sensitive than the rich, she exclaims "It's so consoling. It's such a delight to know that when they suffer they don't feel." Williams actually comments, "Dickens shows that people like Rosa preferred to believe this".

Much good research has gone into these studies. If you need to know – and many might – they can tell you that in 1851 deeds of composition and assignment amounted to ten times the number of official bankruptcies; that in 1843 analysis proved that the principal gas given out from privies and cesspools was sulphurated hydrogen, or that in 1807 when two

### Cassandra

As the express pulled out of the station the young woman sitting opposite me said, "The world will end within the hour, when a baboon and an idiot-girl couple in the lift of the Hotel Hails Royal. As the poet commended, *Thou shalt not love by ways so dangerous*. Do you not concur? Am I making what you would call sense?"

If I close my eyes I can see her laying her red-head in my lap and crying for seventy miles. When we arrived in the Gare du Nord she screamed, "Wrong again. And somehow Mister Traveller, it's your fault." Since that day astrologers and cops tell me I am someone who is lucky to be alive.

JOHN HUGHES

John Hughes



# Transcending the parochial

James McMullen

JIN'ICHI KONISHI  
A History of Japanese Literature  
Volume Two: The Early Middle Ages  
Translated by Aileen Gatten. Edited by Earl Miner  
416pp. Guildford: Princeton University Press.  
£33.40 (paperback, £13).  
0691065926

This is the second volume of the author's five-volume *Nihon bungeshi* (Tokyo, 1985-87) to appear in a serviceable English edition. As the Japanese title (literally, "A history of Japanese literary art") suggests, Konishi's special concern is with the technical aspects of Japanese literature: questions of genre, prosody, narrative technique, personage, author and audience, unifying techniques, and so on. It is already clear that this history will be both a monument to one man's erudition and a major synthesis of specialist work in its field. It is also idiosyncratic, sometimes provocative, and open to criticism in some aspects of its basic approach as well as in points of detail.

The underlying purpose of the work, announced in the first volume, is "to identify the most fundamental characteristics of Japanese literature". These include brevity, "lack of apposition", harmony of individual and group, emotionality, and implicitness of tone. Put so, the list reads like the dreary litany of the *Nihonjiron* (discussions of Japanese identity), the current obsession of intellectual and middle-brow Japan. Konishi does indeed sometimes attempt to explain literary phenomena by facile references to an ethnic "basic nature". The excellence of his work lies, paradoxically, in another, apparently contradictory, direction: in its international perspective and transcendence of parochial barriers. Konishi is unusually well read in comparative literature, and his work is rich in elegant cross-cultural comparisons. He also sets Japanese literature in the broad context of East Asian literary history, something not systematically attempted in Western accounts before and perhaps possible only at the present remove from the Pacific War.

These two motivations, the particularist concern with special characteristics and the desire to set Japanese literature in a universal scheme, rest uneasily together, but it is arguable that the tension between them generates the dynamic for Konishi's vast survey. This tension is particularly conspicuous in this second volume. Periodization being one of the author's idiosyncrasies, the "Middle Ages" of the sub-title refers not, as in conventional historiography, to the period 1185-1600, but to a longer tract of time from the second half of the ninth to the first half of the nineteenth centuries. During this millennium, the main inspiration of Japanese literature came from the China of, successively, the Six Dynasties (229-589), T'ang (618-906), and Sung (960-1279) periods. These are the Chinese "Middle Ages", and, in classifying later periods of Japanese literary history with them, the author is adopting an evolutionary and ahistorical rather than a conventional historical periodization. Within this longer period, the Early Middle Ages of Volume Two fall roughly from the ninth to the twelfth centuries, coinciding with the Heian period of political history.

Konishi argues that the cult of beauty and courtly love for which this period is widely known was not indigenous but inspired by the Chinese Six Dynasties pursuit of *feng-fu* (Japanese, *fūryū*), "an idealized sphere of worldly pleasures" comprising "music, literature, merry-making, and the company of women". This ideal was exemplified by that "normative cultivated Chinese", the great T'ang poet Po Chü-yi (712-846), knowledge of whose relations with singing girls, for instance, came not only from his works, but "also undoubtedly from reports made by continental emigrants". Perhaps Konishi is wearing his nationalist hat when he makes the curious claim that this ethos was uncongenial to Japanese.

The Taoist style of *fūryū*, especially putting into daily practice the more exotic aspects, was no easy accomplishment. . . . More than a century elapsed [from the eighth century] before the Japanese could bring themselves to perceive these aspects as virtues.

The influence of *fūryū* expressed itself first in the writing of verse and prose in Chinese, to which Konishi devotes lengthy consideration. Not surprisingly, Chinese became a foreign language, standards were not high, most poetry being like "watered vintage wine". Only two poets achieved real distinction, the great Buddhist monk Kūkai (774-835), whose doctrinal treatise *Sangō shigi* (*Indications of the Good of the Three Teachings*) is praised for its "structural beauty", and the poet-politician Sogawara no Michizane (845-905), whose verse possessed a personal quality and an element of social protest extremely rare in the Japanese literary tradition. Sadly, however, Kūkai's work, in Konishi's judgment, suffers from "euphonic deficiency", and "would certainly not have been hailed as a masterpiece in China", and Michizane's verse failed to emulate the colloquial quality of the writing of his Chinese mentor, Po Chü-yi.

Japanese verse of the period, too, drew heavily for inspiration on the *fūryū* ideal, and on the "ubiquitous expression" and "fabricated logic" of Six Dynasties verse. The result, though Konishi does not dwell on this, represents a sad diminution of the splendour of the best verse of the preceding Ancient Period. Less esoteric and controversial are the great prose works of the period, such as *Genji monogatari* (*The Tale of Genji*) and *Makura no sōshi* (*The Pillow Book of Sei Shōnagon*), well known to Western readers through the translations of

Arthur Waley and his successors. Here, the author's identification of brevity as a characteristic of Japanese literature seems peculiarly incongruous. He himself shows that a number of works of this period, such as *Sagoromo monogatari* (*The Story of Sagoromo*) and *Izumi Shikibu nikki* (*The Diary of Izumi Shikibu*), employ the technique of "foreshadowing", only possible within a context of sustained length. The *Genji*, moreover, is said to be twice as long as *War and Peace*, and even though, as a "multipartite" work, it is undeniably episodic, it is unified thematically, in tone and by characterization. For Konishi, however, this great work is simply less "Japanese" than, say, the *Pillow Book*. It, too, is partly to be accounted for by Chinese influence, for the *Shih chi* (*Records of the Historian*) by Su-ma Ch'ien (2145-86 ac) was "the impetus that made it possible, for the first time, to incorporate realism into fictional monogatari [tales]". Konishi rejects, surely correctly, the affective theory of Motoori Norinaga (1730-1801) that the *Genji* is exclusively concerned with "deep emotion", and, following more recent scholarship, sees a strongly political dimension in the first half of the book.

So brief a summary can only suggest the value of this book, for the author, even when summarizing the research of others, opens perspectives that will be fresh, at least to generalists. Much, no doubt, will be provocative to specialists. On the sinological side, it appears

at least debatable, for instance, whether "community with nature" was achieved in poetry only with Tu Fu (712-770); and the author's assertions on the structure of the Chinese bureaucracy need some refinement, at least for the T'ang. Historical linguists will certainly be unhappy that modern, rather than historical, phonology is used for transliterating both Chinese and Japanese. Sometimes, also, the author's critical judgment seems questionable. It is surely, for instance, a misreading of the subtle irony of the highly wrought if banal story *Hanazakuro omi shōshō* (*The Lieutenant Houdsome or Cherry Blossoms*) to claim that the "roughly ninety-two per cent" of the piece that constitutes a "selective description of the hero's life" has "no function in creating the impact of the surprise ending".

Yet such criticisms serve to give the reader purchase on a formidably long and detailed exposition, and do not seriously diminish Konishi's achievement. Perhaps Konishi's most enduring contribution may prove to be that he has permanently shifted the focus of the study of classical Japanese literature in the direction of its Chinese inheritance. From now on, it will be more difficult to write about Japanese literature unless to some extent also to write about the great majority of its practitioners, in the Chinese tradition. The sinophile ghost of Motoori, the eighteenth-century founder of the discipline, has at last been laid to rest.

Interplay of traditional form and sense plays a predominant role presents the translator with great difficulties. If such work still appeals to its English readers this is because the simple combination of resonant but almost entirely natural imagery with humane values always somehow shines through. Chaves's versions are both responsible and responsive, representing a superior, often very satisfying variety of academic translation which preserves sense first and retains vestiges of verbal energy. He makes no deliberate use of rhyme or measure, no significant variation in arrangement or lineation, but his rhythms are usually fluent and pleasing.

What the general reader won't (and may not expect to find reflected here is a true measure of the verbal sophistication and poetic energy in many of the originals. Watson, in his earlier Introduction, welcomed the experimental introduction of formal elements into translations which attempt to reflect some aspects of Chinese poetry's verbal beauty in its own terms. However, neither he nor Chover is an innovator in this sense. Both make compromises which are understandable but which none the less conspire with the inherent uniformity of Chinese *shih* to risk monotony. The further fact that a single translator has rendered many poems' work can increase this risk. The only rival English anthology to the Columbia volumes, *Sunflower Splendour*, edited by Wu-chi Liu and Irving Yucheng Lo, brought together versions by more than fifty translators. This had dangers of its own, instances of its uneven quality; but it did allow variations of style to arise naturally. It also collected fewer poems by more individual poets, whereas Chaves gives us an average of fourteen poems for forty-three poets, which means we have a better chance of beginning to appreciate a particular poet's individual character.

The number of painter-poets in this anthology is striking. The book includes ten hand-made black-and-white plates exemplifying the traditional Chinese association of the "three perfections": poetry, painting and calligraphy. However, exceptional talent even in any two of these arts expressed itself less frequently than Chaves's selection suggests and the appearance of a poem inscribed on a painting is no guarantee of the latter's quality. The book itself is attractive, solidly produced and well printed, using a large typeface. As with the earlier volume, the apparatus has been kept to a minimum. It has a brief introduction, biographical remarks preceding each poet's work and a few notes. One great advantage of this anthology is the simple bibliography of Chinese editions tied to page references which follow each translation.



A Ming woodblock reproduced from The Chinese Scholar's Studio: Artistic life in the late Ming period, the catalogue of an exhibition from the Shanghai Museum, edited by Chu Tsingli and James C. Y. Wan (216pp. Thames and Hudson, £35, 0.500 01423 X).

form. Despite its fundamental lyricism and roots in ancient folk poetry, it has long associations with Confucian morality and the bureaucratically recognized cultivation of the scholar-official. There is a wide enough range of examples in this and the earlier anthology not only to make a rough categorization of the moods and themes of *shih*, but for the reader to become somewhat bored with its limitations.

Finally, there is a major contrast between satirical/historical ballads - Chaves gives us many fine examples of these, such as those by Li K'ai-hsien or Wu Wei-yeh - and the far more numerous, occasional, meditative lyrics. The reader soon identifies the major sub-genres and then, within the occasional lyric, the constantly recurring themes: drinking, friendship, landscape, banishment, becoming a recluse, visiting a recluse, visiting biographical sites - themes met with before in many anthologies of golden-age, T'ang dynasty (618-906) poetry. Often it is not just themes which are shared; poems are being re-written. But the game being played is not one in which originality, even of sense, is particularly important. The emphasis is on solving complex traditional problems in striking ways, while retaining one's sincerity and vision against all the odds; a poetry in which such a highly cultivated

# Moves in a mysterious way

Adrian Cussins

RICHARD SWINBURNE  
The Evolution of the Soul  
323pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press, £25.  
0193249152

Just fourteen years before the twenty-first century, Clarendon Press has published a vigorous defence of a conception of the mind which is in the most important respects like Descartes's seventeenth-century conception. Although Richard Swinburne grants a place to evolution - "four thousand million years of evolution produced man, a body and soul in continuing interaction" - his theory is Cartesian in three ways. First, mental events are events to which their subject has privileged access, and "which he is necessarily in a better position to know about than anyone else". Second, one can, in principle, understand fully the nature of a mind independently of understanding the way in which a mind is embedded in the world. Third, one can, in principle, understand fully the nature of a mind independently of understanding how mind is embodied. Professor Swinburne's theory differs from Descartes's principally in its attitude to many non-human animals, which are held not to be unconscious automata, but conscious beings with souls.

Thus *The Evolution of the Soul* flies in the face of recent work in the philosophy of mind and the cognitive sciences which has tried to show how the mental, at least the cognitive aspects of the mental, can arise out of the physical. Much of this recent work is exceedingly tentative, so were Swinburne to have offered us a convincing alternative to the physicalist account of the relation between mind and body, he should have been applauded. Unfortunately his is a deeply unattractive view, which makes little sense of how it can be that there are persons whose way of being in the world depends on their thought about it.

The book is organized into three parts. Part One presents a taxonomy of the mental life according to which all mental events can be analysed in terms of five elements. Three of these elements are conscious episodes - occurrences within the stream of consciousness - sensations, thoughts and purposings. The other two are continuing mental states of which the agent may from time to time be aware: beliefs and desires. Swinburne here argues that mental events and states are not epiphenomenal but have a causal influence; that mental descriptions are not reducible to descriptions of either brain processes or public behaviour; and that mental states are not identical to bodily states. Part Two is an argument for substance dualism: "there are two parts to a man (and to many another animal) - a body and a soul (or mind)". The body is an "ordinary" material object, but is "connected to" a soul which is the essential part of a person. Part Three focuses on the differences between the mental life of persons and the mental life of other animals. It includes a defence of free will and argues that the soul has a categorical structure "which is formed in part through the brain to which it is connected, but which acquires some independence of that brain".

The book is long and written in a dry style. It is also repetitive in parts and fails to respond adequately to the motivations for a non-Cartesian, non-dualist conception of minds and persons. Occasionally Swinburne manifests a prejudice against science. Nevertheless, the book is concise and stands as an important statement of a conception of our world which is still to be found implicitly in much contemporary thinking. For the naturalist it is a challenge, for it is an explicit denial of what the naturalist holds dearest: that rainstorms, amoebae, chairs, electrons, persons, minds and God are all aspects of a common nature.

Officially, Swinburne's dualism is an ontological doctrine about what kinds of things or substances there are in the world. Substances are components of the world which interact causally with other components of the world which have a history through time - such as chairs, cabbages and persons. Dualism holds that persons are substances which consist of two substances, body and soul. Now this view, as it is explained, is entirely incoherent. The body is a substance in a very weak one: tables

being a chair is a different property from being a table. A dining set is a substance that consists of several chair substances and a table substance, but a single science - physics - is appropriate for understanding all the parts of a dining set. Believing that Swinburne is a professor in the University of Oxford is a different property from there being a high concentration of a certain neurotransmitter in a region of the thalamus. So beliefs and neurotransmitter levels belong to different substances. But, as the example of the dining set shows, nothing of much consequence follows merely from this. Certainly nothing about the fundamental Cartesian divide between *res cogitans* and *res extensa*, or about the possibility of angels, or about a conception of God as a supreme soul, or about the possibility of life after death. We need a reason for thinking that mental substance is wholly unlike any kind of physical substance with respect to the kinds of explanation which are appropriate to it.

Swinburne wants to make quite a lot out of the non-identity of mental and physical properties, even though this version of property identity theory has not been a live option in the philosophy of mind for over twenty years. Even back then, the "Australasian materialists", as they are known, held that mental/physical property identities were not logical identities but contingent identities, discoverable by science.

More recent versions of physicalism have held that identity between properties is an unnecessarily strong relation for preserving the insights of physicalism. If one property is "instantiated in" or "realized by" another on an occasion, that is sufficient for causal equivalence on that occasion. Unfortunately the book contains very little discussion of these notions of instantiation or realization, although they are central to contemporary defences of physicalism. Many modern physicalists hold that identity is only an appropriate relation between particular events. So it is raining is different from every neural property, an event of believing that it is raining at a particular time may be identical to a particular neural event at that time. Swinburne begs the question against this weaker physicalism by defining event identity in a way which depends on property identity.

The importance of Swinburne's dualism is that an understanding of persons must come in two quite separate, independent pieces: a scientific understanding of the bodies of persons, and a non-scientific understanding of the minds of persons. There can be no science of the mind. For the physical aspects of the universe there is a distinction between appearance and reality, a distinction which the scientist can explore. Science can and does change our original commonsense or "folk" concepts of the physical because our folk concepts point beyond themselves to a hidden real nature of the physical. But for Swinburne the real nature of the mental lies on or very close to the surface of appearance. Mental properties are not, on his account, something which a scientist can come to have better understanding of ("access to") than the subject of those properties. When this view is combined with the view that mental events are not identical to or realized in physical events and that mental properties have causal influence, it follows that there are more causal effects in the world than can be studied by science. To put it simply, if my little finger moves an inch to the left, there may be nothing that science can say about why it moved.

It is important to understand how radical this position is. Many recent writers have held the plausible view that there are many different kinds of explanation, only some of which are scientific, while also thinking that every change in the universe has some scientific explanation. So if my little finger moves an inch to the left, there is a scientific explanation of why it moved in terms of its anatomy and physiology; even though explanations of that kind cannot exhaust all there is to say about why my finger moved. For example, my finger moved because I believed that this was the way to type the letter "A" and I wanted to type the letter "A". So even though mental explanations are not scientific explanations, adherents of this plausible view can maintain that a scientist can obtain the course of all changes in the world: it is

or instantiated by, physical properties.

One attraction of this view is that it allows for the pluralistic nature of the universe while being entirely compatible with the goals of science. But Swinburne's position is not compatible with a prominent goal of science: to be able to offer, in principle, some scientific explanation of every change that occurs. Swinburne offers us not merely a "God of the Gaps" - a theological region outside the naturalistic world - but most animals, even foetuses, have parts which belong to the new extended supernatural world.

Just what does follow from the fact that mere knowledge of bodies does not tell you what happens to persons? Not very much. Mere knowledge of the atomic physics of the components of a chair does not tell you whether the chair, or even a chair, survives some alteration. We may conclude quite correctly, but quite innocently, that there is more to chairs than atomic physics. There is little inclination to suppose that it follows that there must be a soul-substance for chairs, unless we mean no more by this than that the identity criteria for chairs cannot be given in atomic physical terms. But talk of chair-souls would be metaphysically top-heavy on this reading; nothing follows about chair-angels, or chair-heavens or a chair-life after incineration. Football games also are not satisfactorily characterized in merely anatomical terms. We could not determine from such a micro-description whether the game of football between Leeds United and St Etienne was the same game before and after the French riot police intervened.

Why does Swinburne end up with his supernaturalism when it is possible to offer what I called the plausible reading of the conclusion for which he has argued: "that truths about persons are other than truths about their bodies and parts thereof"? Swinburne wants a sanitized conception of persons, so that it is possible to understand what it is for a person to have a mind wholly independently of understanding what it is for a person to have a body.

He grants that on earth the functioning, "but not the existence", of souls depends on the brain; but insists that the essential, logical or pure nature of souls is not polluted by the nature of bodies. The metaphors he uses imply that he thinks that the sanitized conception requires rejecting the view that the mind is realized in the brain: "Just as the ignition of a fuse is distinct from the explosion which it causes, so, I shall be arguing, firings of neurones are distinct from the visual sensations or prints which they cause." If we take this metaphor seriously, it not only follows that mental and physical properties and events are non-identical, but also that mental properties are not realized in or instantiated by physical properties (for an explosion is not realized in or instantiated by the ignition of a fuse which causes the explosion).

Swinburne later tries a different analogy: "The soul is like a light bulb and the brain is like an electric light socket. If you plug the bulb into the socket and turn the current on, the light will shine. If the socket is damaged or the current turned off, the light will not shine. So, too, the soul will function (have a mental life) if it is plugged into a functioning brain." Again the realization of the mind in the brain is rejected. But once it is rejected only mystery is left: "We can predict with justification that very similar brains will have connected with them very similar souls. . . . but the source of these correlations remains a mystery. . . . The ability of God's actions to explain the otherwise mysterious mind-body connection is just one more reason for postulating his existence."

The mystery is mysterious indeed. Given Swinburne's acceptance of the causal efficacy of mental properties, and his rejection of any mind/body relation as strong as or stronger than realization, what can he say about the causes of behaviour? Two pictures of the relations between mental events and physical events appear possible for him. Let M1, M2 and M3 represent three particular mental events of a subject, M2 occurring just after M1

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## Guardians against Antichrist

Alastair Hamilton

ULRICH GÄBLER  
Huldrych Zwingli: His life and work  
Translated by Ruth C. L. Gritsch

196pp. Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark. £12.95.  
0567194499

DAVID C. STEINMETZ  
Luther in Context  
146pp. Bloomington: Indiana University  
Press. \$25 (paperback, \$7.95).  
0253336473

HEIKO A. OBERMAN  
Die Reformation: Von Wittenberg nach Gent  
310pp. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und  
Ruprecht.  
3525554082

The most extreme enemies of Rome felt that neither Luther nor Zwingli went far enough in breaking with Catholicism, but more moderate Protestants of the time took the view that they went as far as they could in slightly different directions. Their disagreement, which came to a head in the eucharistic controversy in 1527-8, led to one of those many episodes of sectarian abuse on which the Reformers were wont for expending so much energy. Melancthon questioned Zwingli's sanity and Luther described him as "a clumsy carpenter" who "looks and teaches no part of the Christian faith rightly".

Yet the "clumsy carpenter" remained immensely popular. Although a product of the rational scholasticism of the *via antiqua*, which he studied in Basel, Zwingli had been a reader of Pico della Mirandola and a friend of Erasmus, and had a particular appeal for Protestants with a humanist background in Italy and elsewhere. He had developed his own Protestantism independently of Luther, and the reformation which he supervised in Zürich, from 1522 to his death in the second Kappel war in 1531, had the support of Oecolampadius in Basel and strongly influenced the rest of the Swiss Confederation. It was observed with interest outside the Swiss borders, and Zwingli's policy of having the Church regulated by a pious magistracy was later adopted, in more or less hybrid forms, by Protestant communities in Germany, the Netherlands and England. Numerous Protestants, moreover, held Zwingli's spiritual solution of the eucharistic controversy, his doctrine of the symbolic presence of Christ in the host, to be more satisfactory than the attempts of Luther, and later of Calvin, to cope with the Roman Catholic teaching of transubstantiation.

Ulrich's Gäbler's *Huldrych Zwingli* is a competent introduction to the reformer's activities. Emphasis is justly laid on the economic and social situation in the Swiss Confederation, and Gäbler discusses the most recent historiographical developments on the subject and brings out some of the problems Zwingli scholars have yet to solve. On the whole, Ruth C. L. Gritsch's English translation is fluent, although it is regrettable that monks should be confused with friars and monasteries with convents. The drayhacks of Gäbler's study are its brevity and its dryness. The reader obtains little idea of Zwingli's personality. The admittedly controversial issue of his influence abroad is dismissed in a few lines.

Introductory, too, is David C. Steinmetz's *Luther in Context*, a collection of ten essays in which Luther's ideas are discussed in comparison with those of a somewhat arbitrary selection of predecessors and contemporaries — St Augustine, Dietrich Kolde, John of Salztz, Stampitz, Wendelin Steinbach, Serpando, Biel, Huhmaier and others. Steinmetz's approach can sometimes be stimulating, even though his conclusions are usually predictable. Although it is informative, the chief value of his book, written for readers with no knowledge of ancient or modern languages and very little acquaintance with theological terminology, is in clarity rather than in profundity.

A far deeper treatment of Luther is to be found in Heiko A. Oberman's collection *Die Reformation*, containing thirteen articles written between 1966 and 1984 on various aspects — Luther, the Peasants' Revolt, the Augsburg Confession, Zwingli and Calvin. In the pieces on Luther one is struck by the approach to two problems which students of the Reformation

first is Luther's relationship with mysticism. The great Protestant leaders of the sixteenth century and later are normally associated with a more or less stringent rejection of mystical texts. We have only to think of their condemnation of the fourteenth-century *Theologia Germanica*. For Calvin, the treatise was "forged by the cunning of Satan to mar the simplicity of the Gospel"; and in 1741 John Wesley renounced his former infatuation: "Oh, how was it that I could ever so admire the affected obscurity of this unscriptural writer! Glory be to God that I now prefer the plain apostles and prophets before him and all his mystic followers!" Yet the book was first edited by Luther, in 1515 and 1518, the latter edition published with a preface in which he praised its "art and divine wisdom" and commended it as the most instructive work after the Bible and the writings of St Augustine.

In two articles, "Die Bedeutung der Mystik von Meister Eckhart bis Martin Luther" and "Simul genitus et raptus: Luther und die Mystik", Professor Oberman distinguishes between the aristocratic contemplative system of a thinker like Meister Eckhart and the more pedestrian mysticism of Gerson and Thomas à Kempis, which could be combined with an active everyday life. He charts Luther's treatment of the two traditions over the years. His

## Healing the body politic

Helen Oppenheimer

RONALD H. PRESTON  
The Future of Christian Ethics  
280pp. SCM. Paperback, £12.50.  
0334005264

If only the balanced books could hope to receive as much attention as the unbalanced ones! One hesitates to call a book "interesting" for fear of creating the contrary impression. But if well-informed wisdom and lively fairness are what society and church need, *The Future of Christian Ethics* by Ronald H. Preston is a good place to look.

The main criticism to be made concerns the book's structure, or rather lack of it. It is very much a collection of papers, and may thereby lose some deserved appreciation. The theme is hardly Christian ethics in general, but Christian social ethics: a corrective, of course, to one-sided concentration on personal morality as individual, domestic and sexual to the apparent exclusion of public life. In some quarters this wider emphasis is suspect: theologians who stray from the salvation of the individual are accused of "politicizing the Gospel", falling back upon social concern for lack of any other message. But Professor Preston's arguments are well rooted in theology, which emerges by no means reluctantly though with a certain reticence. He makes it quite clear that his concern with the whole of human life, not only with filtered-out aspects of it, arises from what he believes about God. The occasional asides on the traditional moral problems suggest that he could have discussed them informatively also; and it would have been interesting to see his practical and theological judgment applied to the hurgoning questions of medical ethics. He is judicious on environmental matters, though one feels that this concern is for him a duty rather than thoroughly congenial: he quickly moves back into social ethics.

Politically he is left of centre, but he characteristically keeps the argument going both to right and left, respecting many thought-out positions and reserving his wrath for heedless prejudice. "If I were an Old Testament prophet I would feel like saying 'This says the Lord; cursed be a society which tolerates this prison system; away with it; it is an abomination to me'." He has a sharp eye for paradox and incongruity: such as the fact that the radical student "drop-outs" took the welfare state for granted; and on the other hand, the doctrine held by the prosperous "that the rich need their wealth increased to induce them to work effectively whilst the poor need their wages reduced in order to make them do so. He would like to "rescue" slogans such as the Politics of Imperfection and the Politics of Hope from their supporters. He writes in an

redefinition of certain mystical terms and his adaptation of them to his own doctrine of justification. What attracted Luther in those mystical writers he admired, like Tauler and the author of the *Theologia Germanica*, was a piety based on experience as opposed to the cerebral religiosity of the Schools. If by mysticism we understand a union with Christ crucified achieved through suffering, rather than the ascent of a complex structure elaborated by mystical theologians, then Luther is entitled to be considered a mystic.

The second point which Oberman discusses revealingly, in "Martin Luther: Vorläufer der Reformation", is Luther's eschatological views. Luther was certainly no chiliast and was hostile to the idea of the millennium preceded by a revolutionary transformation of society and entailing the rule of a flamboyant theocracy. Nevertheless, he did have apocalyptic beliefs. Following St Augustine, he was convinced that he was living between the two advents of Christ and that the Church was being undermined by Antichrist. His various definitions of his mission show that he himself merely hoped to keep alive the spirit of the Gospel, to enable the elect to survive and to improve and preserve the world. In his own eyes Luther remained a forerunner of the true Reformation, never its architect.

livened by vivid phrases; for instance, on the notion of divine grace as somehow flowing through people: "Something has gone seriously wrong when human beings are compared to tubas."

It is a main concern of the author's to indicate that Christians cannot expect to move straight from biblical texts to practical policies; but this prohibition does not mean that they have nothing to contribute but generalities. This is where "middle axioms" come in, between moral principles and specific decisions. With a promising blend of optimism and pessimism, he presents a picture of Christians working for agreement at a middle level even if they differ on particular policies, so that they move towards "an informed Christian opinion, which may then feed its influence into the body politic". He does not expect either certainty or unanimity, but offers constructive hopes especially because he has the remarkable gift of being thoroughly political without polarizing. He sees the arguments of his opponents and discounts them sometimes briskly but not sweepingly; he does not nag. He realizes that "struggling with collective morality is not easy for those brought up with an individualist ethic with a biblicist flavour".

There are places where one asks for more: more indeed on the future of Christian ethics, where ethical thinking is to go next. One wishes, for instance, that he would expound his hint that the Protestant work ethic, with its stress on efficiency, diligence and the avoidance of waste, "needs to be balanced by an ethic of celebration". That could sound like a starry-eyed notion, it could do with working out in terms of Professor Preston's robust practical judgment. He could have usefully discussed further the equivocal character of poverty as both "blessed" and to be overcome. His repeated insistence that Christian ethics have been too individualist is a long way from a sinister totalitarianism, and one can be sure that his social concern leaves a proper individualism intact; but one would like to see the relationship between the communal and the personal spelled out further with the sort of fresh and critical appraisal he gives to the relationship between "left" and "right".

Especially one would like him to gather up what he has said here and elsewhere about the notion of Natural Law. Though he criticizes H. L. A. Hart's "attenuated version" of it as "thin", a more positive concept that "morals are natural" to human beings comes through his occasional references and is based to his whole approach. Some of the current confusions about the distinctiveness, or lack of distinctiveness, of Christian morality, about the proper contribution of Christian thinkers to ethical questions, and about how far Christians can and should also be "humanists", seem to him clarification along lines suggested in this book.

## Wildly intrusive

Nigel Barley

LESLIE WOODHEAD  
A Box Full of Spirits: Adventures of a filmmaker in Africa  
246pp. Heinemann. £12.95.  
034877883

The trilogy of films made by Granda about the Kwegu and Mursi peoples of Ethiopia was unusual for being both good television and good anthropology. The films took a gently probing, non-intrusive approach that seemed to be getting at the truth of events without constraining them to fit Western notions. The Kwegu and Mursi seemed relaxed and easy on camera, intelligent and likeable people who had a message of wider validity to convey about the problems of making choices, of getting along with others, or simply surviving.

Leslie Woodhead was the producer/director of those films, and *A Box Full of Spirits* is his account, based on diaries, of their making. It is a startlingly ingenuous document, in which the film-crew behave like an invading army as, weighed down with huge quantities of superfluous junk, they litter their way across Ethiopia to the blare of rock music. They appear as both terribly disruptive and astonishingly insensitive and never seem to realize that their problems during the filming stem not from what they have had to leave behind, but from what they have insisted on bringing.

But it is the relationships between the local people, the crew and the anthropologist which are the most interesting if least explored part of *A Box Full of Spirits*. David Burton, the anthropologist who was the link with the local people, had spent years building slender but strong social relationships and bridges of trust with the Mursi; in a very real sense, they are a part of his life. While it may be argued that both ethnographers and film-crews are ultimately parasitic, the former is a minor, chronic irritant, the latter a much more dramatic invasion.

It is clear that there was conflict while filming. "Christ! David exploded, 'Does it have to be as artificial as that?' It depends whether you want a film," I blustered."

The producer's job is largely one of organization. He has to get the people to the right place with the right equipment at the right time to take the right pictures. The geography and culture of many Third World countries are inimical to such planning. At the same time, the

## All very innocent

Nigel Ryan

TREVOR MOSTYN  
Coming of Age in the Middle East  
222pp. Kegan Paul International. £14.95.  
0710302085

The sixteen sketches Trevor Mostyn has put together from his travels in Muslim countries between 1968 and 1985 are impressionistic, not journalistic. Yet now and then he finds a piece missing from the Middle East jigsaw assembled for us by reporters and academics. In his Introduction he declares: "If I have attempted to describe these countries as I would describe England, my own country." He sets out to ignore local susceptibilities and to paint his pictures as if they did not exist. The result is that he sees with an innocent eye and, here and there, so can we. So natural and human is his feeling with a group of Al-Fateh Palestinians during a trip to Cairo that for a moment we suspend horror at their readiness to sacrifice a quarter of the Arab nation (as well as themselves and anyone getting in their way) for the good of the whole. Instead we are reminded that as well as being terrorists these are young people as holy in pursuit of girls as is the author himself. Mostyn gives them a human face; and it is not a question of propaganda. It is not that there are wrong political judgments, but rather a refreshing absence of any judgement at all.

*Coming of Age in the Middle East* has a questionable title. It is not clear that the author



A detail from Wilfred Thesiger's photograph of a Borma elder in Southern Ethiopia, 1959, reproduced from his *Visions of a Nomad* (224pp. Collins. £20. 0 00 217729 3).

anthropologist is working in the unaccustomed company of fellow countrymen, who prevent his own cultural acclimatization. In such circumstances, conflict is inevitable, and no small part of the producer's job will be to stop it getting out of hand. He, in turn, will appear to outsiders as a monomaniac whose only reality lies in the pictures he captures, in the service of which the outside world is largely a prop or an obstacle. This is why much of the book dwells on logistical problems which result from the almost impossible task that film-crews set

themselves. While the anthropologist thinks in terms of years, the television man has to "wrap" his programme in a few short weeks. To the locals, tourists already look like caricatures. The film man is yet one more degree removed from the real world — richer, more frantic, more obsessed with pictures — a caricature of the tourist. All this demonstrates how much art, and how many mediations of the ethnographer, must have gone into the creation of that easy naturalness which was the hallmark of these particular films.

The freshness of Mostyn's book will either irritate or delight. It is by turns thrilling and exasperating. There are some memorable passages: in Riyadh, a technical consultant now, he enters the twilight world of Saudi business, thousands of miles and several centuries removed from the wording of the patter he purveys ("I represent Technical Services Worldwide... Our philosophy is based upon the premise that we will tailor our man for the culture that suits him best"). The sheikh to whom he is selling becomes distracted by a series of telephone calls, and finally, terminally, by news of a new motor bike capable of 200 kilometres an hour. A rare meeting with the Deputy Minister for Agriculture is broken up by a delegation of bedouin cousins bursting in to petition him to remove a fence put across their grazing land by a neighbour.

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## Highly typical

Xan Fielding

TED WALKER  
In Spain  
285pp. Secker and Warburg. £12.95.  
0 436 56121 2

Ted Walker fell in love with Spain slowly and imperceptibly, "as one might fall in love with a far-flung pen-pal". Six years of studying her language and literature turned his interest first into affection, then into passion; but it was not until 1955, at the age of twenty, that he first caught sight of the beloved, when he acted as guide-interpreter to his parents and some friends on a trip to Barcelona. Since then he has been back several times and this book describes two recent visits.

The first half is devoted to a three-month sojourn in Cuenca, where he made a point of staying in the modern and less attractive lower town, away from the arty international colony inhabiting the *casas colgadas*, those spectacular houses overhanging the precipice on which the medieval upper city is built. He was less concerned with the picturesque than with everyday native life. He also made a point of maintaining a routine — breakfast each morning at the same hour in the same café, followed by the same short walk in the park before going back to his room to work — for routine, he believed, conferred a kind of honorary citizenship on any traveller who chose to put down temporary roots. Within a few weeks, dressed in field-worker's denims and a *sombrero de campesino*, he had managed to blend so well with his surroundings that crutch parties would sometimes take him for a local rustic, ask him to pose for their cameras and even tip him for his pains.

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Four years later he was back, this time at the wheel of his own car. Motoring usually isolates one from the countries through which one travels, but in Walker's case it had the opposite effect, enabling him to immerse himself all the more deeply in Spanish life. He drove at random, with no fixed itinerary, stopping for as long as he wished at any town or village that took his fancy. The resonance of a place-name was enough to attract him. Madrigal de las Altas Torres, for instance, held a magical charm for him even after he discovered that *madrigal* meant not what it seems but a briar patch. As for the *altas torres*, these turned out to be a pair of futuristic grain silos. No matter: it was not for sight seeing that he had come back to Spain but for the company and companionship of Spaniards.

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Therein lies the weakness of *In Spain*. Its Spaniards are too *tipica* to be true; they seem to belong to a golden age unaffected by mass tourism and industrialization. But therein also lies its charm: the author would rather idealize the present than regret the past. This, then, is a labour of love if ever there was one. And, as we all know, love is blind.



## Guardians against Antichrist

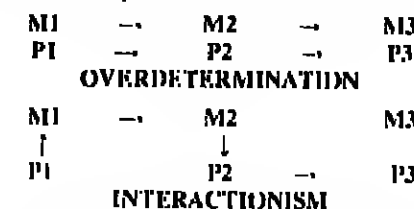
Alastair Hamilton

ULRICH GÄBLER  
Hiltdrych Zwingli: His life and work  
Translated by Ruth C. L. Gritsch  
196pp. Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark. £12.95.  
(1567184499)

DAVID C. STEINMETZ  
Luther in Context  
146pp. Bloomington: Indiana University  
Press. \$25 (paperback, \$7.95).  
(1253336473)

HEIKO A. OBERMAN  
Die Reformation: Von Wittenberg nach Genf  
311pp. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und  
Ruprecht.  
\$25.50 (hardcover, \$7.95).

and M3 occurring just after M2. Likewise let P1, P2 and P3 represent three similarly related physical events occurring in the brain of the subject, M1 at the same time as P1 and so on. The arrow represents the causal relation.



The diagram represents only one interactionist possibility, but the objection generalizes to the other possibilities: interactionism is incompatible with basic principles of the physical sciences, such as the conservation of energy and momentum. For since on physical cause has brought about P2, the energy level of the system at the time of P2 may be greater than the energy level of the system at the time of P1, without there being a corresponding energy level reduction in some external system. Swinburne, I understand, is prepared to accept that his philosophical conception of the mind is incompatible with basic physical principles, while continuing to believe in that conception of the mind. I find this astonishing. Are his arguments so strong as to bring down the entire edifice of naturalism?

The overdetermination picture renders impossible any explanation of the evolution of mental states in terms of natural selection. For if the physical causal sequence is independent of the mental causal sequence and sufficient for behaviour, there would be no evolutionary advantage to the possession of mental states. On this picture, if two organisms were physically identical, but only one exhibited mental causal sequences, both organisms would nevertheless possess identical evolutionary fitness. Hence there is no fitness advantage to the possession of mental states. (I mention this objection because Swinburne argues against epiphenomenalism on the grounds that if conscious episodes were not causally efficacious, there would be no evolutionary advantages in an organism developing them.)

There is general objection to overdetermination, an objection which also counts against the inclusion of overdetermination sequences within a broadly interactionist picture. The behaviour of a person is both physiologically caused and intentionally caused. I move as I do because I wish to get up from my seat and leave by the door. But my body moves as it does because of a certain pattern of physiological causation. Since the patterns of physiological causation and intentional causation are so completely different, what is it that prevents my mind and my body from being torn apart? I may adequately predict within rough limits how I will move just after forming my intention to leave by the door, even though I appeal to no knowledge whatsoever about my internal physiological condition. But if my physiological condition had been different, my body would have stayed put in the chair or collapsed in a heap on the floor. If, like Swinburne's dualists, we take the level of physiological explanation to be an explanatorily independent level of characterization of the behaviour of bodies, then we ought to suppose that a future physiologist would be able to predict within rough limits the motions of my body during the next five minutes, even though he knows nothing about my intention to write these sentences. But if my intention had been to write about football instead, or to get up from my desk, then the motions of my body would have been so different as to render false the physiologist's predictions. How can it be that my physiology and my psychology march in step so as to make my (body's) behaviour coherent from both the physiological and psychological perspectives? The dualist can provide no explanation to this.

Swinburne acknowledges that, on his dualist theory, the mind/body relation appears to be a mystery, and so he appeals to divine action. But rather than dignify a flawed conception of the mind by calling it an argument for the existence of God, it is preferable to reject the dualist theory. The real theological challenge is to understand God as an aspect of nature, rather than as an interventionist supernatural force to which we may appeal when our theory of nature runs into trouble.

The most extreme enemies of Rome felt that neither Luther nor Zwingli went far enough in breaking with Catholicism, but more moderate Protestants of the time took the view that they went as far as they could go, in slightly different directions. Their disagreement, which came to a head in the eucharistic controversy in 1527-8, led to one of those many episodes of sectarian abuse on which the Reformers were noted for expending so much energy. Melancthon questioned Zwingli's sanity and Luther described him as "a clumsy carpenter" who "holds and teaches no part of the Christian faith rightly".

Yet the "clumsy carpenter" remained immensely popular. Although a product of the rational scholasticism of the *via antiqua*, which he studied in Basel, Zwingli had been a reader of Pico della Mirandola and a friend of Erasmus, and had a particular appeal for Protestants with a humanist background in Italy and elsewhere. He had developed his own Protestantism independently of Luther, and the reformation which he supervised in Zürich, from 1522 to his death in the second Kappel war in 1531, had the support of Oecolampadius in Basel and strongly influenced the rest of the Swiss Confederation. It was observed with interest outside the Swiss borders, and Zwingli's policy of having the Church regulated by a pious magistracy was later adopted, in more or less hybrid forms, by Protestant communities in Germany, the Netherlands and England. Numerous Protestants, moreover, held Zwingli's spiritual solution of the eucharistic controversy, his doctrine of the symbolic presence of Christ in the host, to be more satisfactory than the attempt of Luther, and later of Calvin, to cope with the Roman Catholic teaching of transubstantiation.

Ulrich's Gähler's *Hiltdrych Zwingli* is a competent introduction to the reformer's activities. Emphasis is justly laid on the economic and social situation in the Swiss Confederation, and Gähler discusses the most recent historiographical developments on the subject and brings out some of the problems Zwingli scholars have yet to solve. On the whole, Ruth C. L. Gritsch's English translation is fluent, although it is regrettable that monks should be confused with friars and monasteries with convents. The drawbacks of Gähler's study are its brevity and its dryness. The reader obtains little idea of Zwingli's personality. The admittedly controversial - issue of his influence abroad is dismissed in a few lines.

Introductory, too, is David C. Steinmetz's *Luther in Context*, a collection of ten essays in which Luther's ideas are discussed in comparison with those of a somewhat arbitrary selection of predecessors and contemporaries - St Augustine, Dietrich Kolde, John of Palz, Stumpitz, Wendelin Steinbach, Seripando, Biel, Hubmaier and others. Steinmetz's approach can sometimes be stimulating, even though his conclusions are usually predictable. Although it is informative, the chief value of his book, written for readers with no knowledge of ancient or modern languages and very little acquaintance with theological terminology, is in clarity rather than in profundity.

A far deeper treatment of Luther is to be found in Heiko A. Oberman's collection *Die Reformation*, containing thirteen articles written between 1966 and 1984 on various aspects of Luther, the Peasant's Revolt, the Augsburg Confession, Zwingli and Calvin. In the pieces on Luther one is struck by the approach to problems which students of the Reformation are bound to encounter. The articles in an

first is Luther's relationship with mysticism. The great Protestant leaders of the sixteenth century and later are normally associated with a more or less stringent rejection of mystical texts. We have only to think of their condemnation of the fourteenth-century *Theologia Germanica*. For Calvin, the treatise was "fueled by the cunning of Satan to mar the simplicity of the Gospel"; and in 1741 John Wesley renounced his former infatuation: "Oh, how was it that I could ever so admire the affected obscurity of this unscriptural writer! Glory be to God that I now prefer the plain apostles and prophets before him and all his mystic followers!" Yet the book was first edited by Luther, in 1515 and 1518, the latter edition published with a preface in which he praised its "art and divine wisdom" and commended it as the most instructive work after the Bible and the writings of St Augustine.

In two articles, "Die Bedeutung der Mystik von Meister Eckhart bis Martin Luther" and "Simul gemitus et raptus: Luther und die Mystik", Professor Oberman distinguishes between the aristocratic contemplative system of a thinker like Meister Eckhart and the more peasant mysticism of Gerson and Thomas à Kempis, which could be combined with an active everyday life. He charts Luther's treatment of the two traditions over the years, his

redefinition of certain mystical terms and his adaptation of them to his own doctrine of justification. What attracted Luther in those mystical writers he admired, like Tauler and the author of the *Theologia Germanica*, was a piety based on experience as opposed to the cerebral religiosity of the Schools. If by mysticism we understand a union with Christ crucified achieved through suffering, rather than the ascent of a complex structure elaborated by mystical theologians, then Luther is entitled to be considered a mystic.

The second point which Oberman discusses revealingly, in "Martin Luther: Vorläufer der Reformation", is Luther's eschatological views. Luther was certainly no chiliast and was hostile to the idea of the millennium preceded by a revolutionary transformation of society and entailing the rule of a flamboyant theocracy. Nevertheless, he did have apocalyptic beliefs. Following St Augustine, he was convinced that he was living between the two advents of Christ and that the Church was being undermined by Antichrist. His various definitions of his mission show that he himself merely hoped to keep alive the spirit of the Gospel, to enable the elect to survive and to improve and preserve the world. In his own eyes Luther remained a forerunner of the true Reformation, never its architect.

## Healing the body politic

Helen Oppenheimer

RONALD H. PRESTON  
The Future of Christian Ethics  
280pp. SCM. Paperback, £12.50.  
0334005264

If only the balanced books could hope to receive as much attention as the unbalanced ones! One hesitates to call a book "interesting" for fear of creating the contrary impression. But if well-informed wisdom and lively fairness are what society and church need, *The Future of Christian Ethics* by Ronald H. Preston is a good place to look.

The main criticism to be made concerns the book's structure, or rather lack of it. It is very much a collection of papers, and may thereby lose some deserved appreciation. The theme is hardly Christian ethics in general, but Christian social ethics: a corrective, of course, to one-sided concentration on personal morality as individual, domestic and sexual to the apparent exclusion of public life. In some quarters this wider emphasis is suspect: theologians who stray from the salvation of the individual are accused of "politicizing the Gospel", falling back upon social concern for lack of any other message. But Professor Preston's arguments are well rooted in theology, which emerges by no means reluctantly though with a certain reticence. He makes it quite clear that his concern with the whole of human life, not only with filtered-out aspects of it, arises from what he believes about God. The occasional asides on the traditional moral problems suggest that he could have discussed them informatively also; and it would have been interesting to see his practical and theological judgment applied to the burgeoning questions of medical ethics. He is judicious on environmental matters, though one feels that this concern is for him a duty rather than thoroughly congenial: he quickly moves back into social ethics.

Politically he is left of centre, but he characteristically keeps the argument going both to right and left, respecting many thought-out positions and reserving his wrath for heedless prejudice. "If I were an Old Testament prophet I would feel like saying 'Thus says the Lord; cursed be a society which tolerates this prison system; away with it! It is an abomination to me.' He has a sharp eye for paradox and incongruity: such as the fact that the radical student "drop-outs" took the welfare state for granted; and on the other hand, the doctrine held by the prosperous "that the rich need their wealth increased to induce them to work effectively whilst the poor need their wages reduced in order to make them do so." He would like to "rescue" slogans such as the "Politics of Imperfection" and the "Politics of Hope" from their supporters. He desires in an

livened by vivid phrases; for instance, on the notion of divine grace as somehow flowing through people: "Something has gone seriously wrong when human beings are compared to tubes."

It is a main concern of the author's to indicate that Christians cannot expect to move straight from biblical texts to practical policies; but this prohibition does not mean that they have nothing to contribute but generalities. This is where "middle axioms" come in, between moral principles and specific decisions. With a promising blend of optimism and pessimism, he presents a picture of Christians working for agreement at a middle level even if they differ on particular policies, so that they move towards "an informed Christian opinion, which may then feed its influence into the body politic". He does not expect either certainty or unanimity, but offers constructive hopes especially because he has the remarkable gift of being thoroughly political without politicizing. He sees the arguments of his opponents and discounts them sometimes briskly but not sweepingly; he does not nag. He realizes that "struggling with collective morality is not easy for those brought up with an individualistic ethic with a biblical flavour".

There are places where one asks for more: more indeed on the future of Christian ethics, where ethical thinking is to go next. One wishes, for instance, that he would expand his hint that the Protestant work ethic, with its stress on efficiency, diligence and the avoidance of waste, "needs to be balanced by an ethic of celebration". That could sound like a starchy-eyed notion. It could do with working out in terms of Professor Preston's robust practical judgment. He could have usefully discussed further the equivocal character of poverty as both "blessed" and to be overcome. His repeated insistence that Christian ethics have been too individualist is a long way from a sinister totalitarianism, and one can be sure that his social concern leaves a proper individualism intact; but one would like to see the relationship between the communal and the personal spelled out further with the sort of breadth and critical appraisal he gives to the relationship between "left" and "right".

Especially one would like him to gather up what he has said here and elsewhere about the notion of Natural Law. Though he criticizes H. L. A. Hart's "attenuated version" of it as "thin", a much more positive concept that "morals are 'natural' to human beings" comes though his occasional references and is basic to his whole approach. Some of the current confusions about the distinctiveness, or lack of distinctiveness, of Christian morality, about the proper contribution of Christian thinkers to ethical questions, and about how far Christians can and should also be "humanists", seem to await clarification along lines suggested in this book.

## Wildly intrusive

Nigel Barley

LESLIE WOODHEAD  
A Box Full of Spirits: Adventures of a filmmaker in Africa  
246pp. Heinemann. £12.95.  
043477883

The trilogy of films made by Granada about the Kwegu and Mursi peoples of Ethiopia was unusual for being both good television and good anthropology. The films took a gently probing, non-intrusive approach that seemed to be getting at the truth of events without constraining them to fit Western notions. The Kwegu and Mursi seemed relaxed and easy on camera, intelligent and likeable people who had a message of wider validity to convey about the problems of making choices, of getting along with others, or simply surviving.

Leslie Woodhead was the producer/director of those films, and *A Box Full of Spirits* is his account, based on diaries, of their making. It is a startlingly ingenious document, in which the film crew behave like an invading army as, weighed down with huge quantities of superfluous junk, they litter their way across Ethiopia to the blare of rock music. They appear as both terribly disruptive and astonishingly insensitive and never seem to realize that their problems during the filming stem not from what they have had to leave behind, but from what they have insisted on bringing.

But it is the relationships between the local people, the crew and the anthropologist which are the most interesting if least explored part of *A Box Full of Spirits*. David Turton, the anthropologist who was the link with the local people, had spent years building slender but strong social relationships and bridges of trust with the Mursi; in a very real sense, they are a part of his life. While it may be argued that both ethnographers and film-crews are ultimately parasitic, the former is a minor, chronic irritant, the latter a much more dramatic invasion. It is clear that there was conflict while filming. "Christ! David exploded, 'Does it have to be as artificial as that?' 'It depends whether you want a film,' I blustered."

The producer's job is largely one of organization. He has to get the people to the right place with the right equipment at the right time to take the right pictures. The geography and culture of many Third World countries are inimical to such planning. At the same time, the



A detail from Wilfred Thesiger's photograph of a Boran elder in Southern Ethiopia, 1959, reproduced from his *Visions of a Nomad* (224pp. Collins. £20. 0 00 217729 3).

anthropologist is working in the unaccustomed company of fellow countrymen, who prevent his own cultural acclimatization. In such circumstances, conflict is inevitable, and no small part of the producer's job will be to stop it getting out of hand. He, in turn, will appear to outsiders as a monomaniac whose only reality lies in the pictures he captures. In the service of which the outside world is largely a prop or an obstacle. This is why much of the book dwells on logistical problems which result from the almost impossible task that film-crews set

themselves. While the anthropologist thinks in terms of years, the television man has to "wrap" his programme in a few short weeks. To the locals, tourists already look like caricatures. The film man is yet one more degree removed from the real world - richer, more frantic, more obsessed with pictures - a caricature of the tourist. All this demonstrates how much art, and how many mediations of the ethnographer, must have gone into the creation of that easy naturalness which was the hallmark of these particular films.

## All very innocent

Nigel Ryan

TREVOR MOSTYN  
Coming of Age in the Middle East  
222pp. Kegan Paul International. £14.95.  
07103 0208 8

The sixteen sketches Trevor Mostyn has put together from his travels in Muslim countries between 1968 and 1985 are impressionism, not journalism. Yet now and then he finds a piece missing from the Middle East jigsaw assembled for us by reporters and academics. In his introduction he declares: "I have attempted to describe these countries as I would describe England; my own country." He sets out to ignore local susceptibilities and to paint his picture as if they did not exist. The result is that he sees with an innocent eye and, here and there, so can we. So natural and human is his meeting with a group of Al-Fateh Palestinians during a trip to Cairo that for a moment we suspend horror at their readiness to sacrifice a quarter of the Arab nation (as well as themselves and anyone getting in their way) for the good of the whole. Instead we are reminded that as well as being terrorists these are young people as hotly in pursuit of girls as is the author himself. Mostyn gives them a human face; and there are wrong political judgments, but rather a refreshing absence of any judgment at all.

*Coming of Age in the Middle East* has a questionable title. It is not clear that the author

quite reaches the maturity suggested: the unifying theme is less a growth to manhood than the saga of an English public schoolboy scouring the world from Tamarassat to Tehran in search of love and adventure. All the girls we meet are pretty, and all initially unavailable, although a surprising number seem to turn up later on the author's doorstep in Oxford. Quite what has happened in between is unclear.

But Mostyn is well educated, knows his history and above all speaks fluent Arabic and Persian, so that he can really understand the people he meets. His very innocence attracts the protection and friendship of an amazing assortment, from guerrillas to girls, border guards in Syria to secret policemen in Iran and Egypt. He possesses seemingly limitless physical stamina. Armed with these credentials he becomes the central figure in a bewildering succession of adventures, many violent, which (but for the transparent honesty of the narrator) one would have difficulty in believing. In the course of the book Mostyn hitchhikes through the Sahara to Tamarassat, crosses the Empty Quarter of Saudi Arabia, smuggles himself illegally from Lebanon into Syria and Turkey and back again; is bombed in Egypt, doped in Baalbek; he witnesses a flog in Jeddah and attends the start of the revolution in Tehran. There appears to be plenty of time for flirtation - perhaps seduction, too - in between. The author's appetite for adventure is in the highest tradition of the Victorian traveller, while all the while a part of his thoughts remain fixed on that other tradition of *The Wilder Shores of Love*.

The freshness of Mostyn's book will either irritate or delight. It is by turns thrilling and exasperating. There are some memorable passages: in Riyadh, a technical consultant now, he enters the twilight world of Saudi business, thousands of miles and several centuries removed from the wording of the pater he purveys ("I represent Technical Services Worldwide... Our philosophy is based upon the premise that we will tailor our man to the culture that suits him best"). The shock to whom he is selling becomes distracted by a series of telephone calls, and finally, terminally, by news of a new motor bike capable of 200 kilometres an hour. A rare meeting with the Deputy Minister for Agriculture is broken up by a delegation of hedonist cousins hurrying in to petition him to remove a fence put across their grazing land by a neighbour.

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